INSIGHTS
INTO
ISLAMIC THOUGHT

Volume II

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Translated by
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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

Preface

A collection of my articles, titled Tafheemat, has already been published some years back. It is after a long interval that this second volume is being published. Although the fact remains that the articles contained herein were already written down and published long back and only their compilation was pending, this simple task took years to seek its way out of my notes, given the preoccupations I was submerged in. Now that the Government of Pakistan has lent me an opportunity to spend my life in exile, I am using this time to complete a lot of half-baked work, in addition to improving upon my moral, spiritual and academic pursuits.

This compilation contains articles having diverse topics, which have been written over the past fifteen to twenty years on numerous occasions. Despite their mutually unrelated content, what binds these articles together is their common purpose- to dispel the doubts and misunderstandings that arise about Islam from various quarters, to shut all the avenues of ideological corruption that get ingrained in the minds of Muslims and to introduce before the masses a balanced approach towards the understanding and interpretation of contemporary religious issues.

At the conclusion of every article, I have mentioned the date on which it was first published in Tarjumanul Qur'an. But this should not be constructed to mean that the article has been lifted verbatim from the primary source without any editing whatsoever. While revising the articles,

I have made certain corrections in the language and content, omitted out certain paragraphs and added certain others.

20th Rabiul Awwal 1369 AH
10th January 1950 CE

Abul Ala
New Central Jail, Multan

Translator's Note

To Allah is due all praise and gratitude, who is the Lord of the Worlds.

Peace and blessings be upon His trustworthy messenger, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

It has indeed been an honour and privilege to translate this book. I have tried my best to keep this book as lively as I could; resorting to a flowing translation instead of sticking to a verbatim in English. This task is itself difficult because I was required to deviate from the idioms and phrases used in the Urdu text and, at the same time, convey the essence of those idioms in English keeping the intention of the author intact.

Although it is the ubiquitous case with all translations that the emotions and depth of words tend to get 'lost in translation', this is all the more pronounced with the Qur'an and the Hadith. These are unmatched in the richness of their language and are hence inimitable; making them extremely difficult to translate. As for the Qur'an passages interspersed in this book, I have mostly referred to the translation offered by Zafar Ishaq Ansari (Towards Understanding the Qur'an) and the one by Saheeh International. Translating the Hadith is much more tedious and quite delicate an exercise because of the immense responsibility it entails. The concise sentences used by Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and the cherry-picked words the Prophet has utilized can never by rendered in any other language. I request the reader to not expect a perfect translation of the Hadith in any book. Having said this, I have tried my best to scout available translations of relevant aHadith from other sources to be as close to the

actual meaning as possible, but errors are inevitable. Hadith scholars append even Arabic Hadith narrations with *Au kama qala Rasool Allah* ﷺ ('or something similar to this was said by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ'). Hence, the need for this refrain to be appended with translations cannot be overemphasized. I have not inserted this caveat through the text fearing loss of continuity, but I request the reader to keep this in mind wherever and whenever he or she comes across a Hadith narration- in Arabic or any other language.

Also, and for the same reason, I have not translated terminologies like *Surah*, *ayat/ayaat* and *deen* as Chapters, verse(s) and religion, as is the usual (but erroneous) practice. Instead, I have let them remain, simply transliterating them. *Deen* is a comprehensive term used by the Qur'an to cover the entire system of life, including its political, legal and socio-religious dimensions.

All said and done, whatever justice I have been able to do with the original text I owe to none but God, and wherever I may have erred I blame my own weaknesses.

May Allah accept this work from the author and this translator.

September 2017 **_Dr. Parvez Mandviwala_**

How does the Qur'an Portray its Emissary?

The world has always witnessed pious people who have shown its inhabitants the straight path of truth and justice by virtue of their words and deeds in order to guide them through. However, man has almost always returned their favour with injustice and persecution. But this injustice was not only perpetrated by their enemies who paid no heed to their teachings, cast aspersions over their integrity, discarded their fervent appeals and tried to force them to abandon the straight path; injustice was also inflicted upon them by their own acolytes who distorted their true teachings after they had passed away, altered the guidance they had received, corrupted the books handed over to them and ultimately raised their status to divinity by giving in to their vague fantasies. The first category of injustice was limited to the life-span of these exalted personalities, or occasionally went on till only a few years after their death. However, the second form of injustice continued for centuries after their death, and is even being borne by many of those elders till date.

All the teachers of truth who have walked the earth have exhausted their tenure in abolishing those false claims of divinity that man had fabricated in defiance of the One True God. But it so happened- and it always so happened- that their blind followers made a *god* out of these very teachers or made them some sort of associate in divinity, and they ironically ended up as an idol, among the many idols they strived to demolish all their lives.

Actually, man so underestimates himself that he fails to acknowledge that qualities of purity and exaltedness can ever exist among fellow human beings. He considers himself weak and debased. It never does cross his mind that

the Creator, out of His sublime knowledge and will, has infused within this figure of clay those virtues and qualities that can make him surpass the exalted status enjoyed by high-ranked angels in the celestial realm, while still being a human, endowed with human elements. This is precisely why the contemporaries of every such person who put forth the claim that he was an emissary from God, initially dismissed his claim on the basis of him being as much a human being of sweat and blood as they themselves were. And when they eventually bowed down before him upon witnessing his extraordinarily sublime personality, they arrived at the conclusion that the bearer of such extraordinary qualities can never be a human being in the first place. This led to one group proclaiming him as god, another group claiming him to be a reincarnation of God, some others believing he was in possession of divine powers and attributes while yet others declared him to be a son of God!

سُبْحٰنَهٗ وَتَعٰلٰى عَمَّا يَصِفُوْنَ۝

'He is Holy and Exalted, far above that which they attribute to Him.' (Surah alAn'am ayat 100)

Look up the life of any religious leader. You would notice that it is his followers who have inflicted the worst form of injustice on him. They so obscured his personality with their fabrications and fancies that it became impossible to discern his true face. Not only did it become difficult to study his original teachings from his now corrupted books, but we are even unable to know exactly who or what he was. Miracles and supernatural phenomena came to be associated with his birth, his childhood, his youth and old age, each and every aspect of his life and even his death! Thus, he appears to be a fantasy from the beginning to the end and is portrayed as either being God himself or a son of God or a reincarnation of God or he was at least a part of divinity in the very least bit.

Take Gautam Buddha for instance. A deep study into Buddhism only reveals that this determined gentleman rectified many faults of Brahmanism and falsified many a deity that were being worshipped during his age. But no sooner had a year lapsed since his death than his disciples completely altered his teachings at the 'Council of Vaisali'. They abandoned the original sutras for new ones and corrupted the doctrine as per their whims and fancies. On the one hand they formulated such ideologies under the garb of Buddhism that had no concept of God, and on the other hand, they declared Buddha to be an omniscient being, the centre of the universe and an entity that comes into the world as a Buddha in every era in order to reform it. His birth, life and previous and future births have been woven into such unrealistic tales that research scholars like Professor Wilson were compelled to exclaim that such a person has never ever existed in history! Within a span of three to four centuries, these tales infused a sense of divinity in the Buddha and during the reign of Kanishka a large council of Buddhist monks (held at Kashmir) concluded that Buddha was actually a material manifestation of God, or in other words, was a reincarnation of God Himself....

The same befell Ram as well. It is amply evident from the study of Ramayana that King Ram was a mere mortal. While he was undoubtedly an exceedingly kind hearted, just, courageous, generous, humble and forbearing person, he was nowhere close to divinity. However, the presence of such high qualities in an individual proved to be so perplexing to Indians that their intellect could not come to terms with it. Accordingly, succeeding generations came to revere him as a reincarnation of Vishnu [1] and he was

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[1] As per contemporary Hindu ideology, Vishnu is the god who nurtures the universe or looks after its maintenance. This could probably have been an idea of God's quality of being *Rabb* (Lord) which was later personified into a deity. Deity-worship originated among Hindus when

believed to be one of those individuals through whom Vishnu descends on the earth to rectify it from time to time.

In this context, Shri Krishna has had to bear with more injustice than these two personalities. A deep study of the Bhagwat Gita that has reached us- after all the interpolations and distortions it has gone through- tells us that Shri Krishna was a monotheist who had preached the omnipresence and omnipotence of God. At the same time, the Mahabharata, the Vishnu Purana, Bhagwat Purana and the Gita itself depict a contrasting image of Krishna. While they showcase him as the reincarnation of Vishnu, the creator and planner of the universe, they also attribute to him such base weaknesses that it becomes difficult to imagine him as a human being of upright character, let alone a god.

The Gita quotes Krishna thus:

'I am the father of this universe, the mother, the support and the grandsire. I am the object of knowledge, the purifier and the syllable Om. I am also the Rig, the Sama and the Yajur Vedas. I am the goal, the sustainer, the master, the witness, the abode, the refuge and the dearest friend. I am the creation and the annihilation, the basis of everything, the resting place and the eternal seed. O Arjuna, I give heat, and I withhold and send forth the rain. I am immortality, and I am also death personified. Both- spirit and matter are in me.' *(9:17-19)*

'Neither the hosts of demigods nor the great sages know my origin or opulence, for, in every respect, I am the source of the demigods and sages. He who knows me as the unborn, without a beginning, as the Supreme Lord of all the worlds- the holy, undeluded among men, is freed from all sins.' *(10:2-3)*

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they dissociated the various qualities of God from God Himself and personified that quality into a deity.

'O Arjuna, I am the soul that is seated in the hearts of all living entities. I am the beginning, the middle and the end of all beings. Of the twelve Adityas[1], *I am Vishnu, of lights I am the radiant sun, of the Maruts I am Marichi*[2], *and among the stars I am the moon.'*

(10:20-21)

[The following verses of this chapter indicate that Krishna's opulence pervades all elements of nature. The concluding verse states, (Translator)]

'With a single fragment of myself I pervade and support this entire universe.' *(10:42)*

'Those who perform all their duties for my sake, who depend upon me and are devoted to me, who are free from attachment, and are without malice toward all beings, such devotees certainly come to me.' *(11:55)*

'Although I am unborn, the Lord of all living entities, and have an imperishable nature, yet I appear in this world by virtue of Yogmaya (my divine power).

Whenever there is a decline in righteousness and an increase in unrighteousness, O son of Bharat (Arjuna), at that time I manifest myself on earth.

To protect the righteous, to annihilate the wicked, and to re-establish the principles of dharma I appear on this earth, age after age.' *(4:6-8)*

In these Gita passages, Krishna has, in no uncertain terms, claimed to be God[3]. On the other hand, the same

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[1] Of all the Hindu gods, 12 are supreme. These are called Adityas, Vishnu being the greatest among them. As per Hindu ideology, these 12 Adityas were born to Aditi.

[2] In Hindu terminology, Maruts are the 49 gods who control the winds. Marichi is their commander.

[3] The aforementioned quotation could have been attributed to God, and Krishna would have been absolved of claiming divinity for himself only if the Gita had been the claimant of being God's revealed book with Krishna being a prophet to whom it had been revealed. But the problem is that this book presents itself as a collection of Krishna's

Krishna is portrayed in the Bhagwat Purana as a person who hides away the clothes of maidens when they are having a bath and makes as many replicas of himself as the number of maidens in order to enjoy with them all. It also mentions the conversation of Maharishi Suka and King Parikshit, where the latter asks the Rishi, 'God undergoes reincarnation to establish the true dharma. What kind of a god is he then who maintains illicit relations with the wives of other men, overriding all principles of dharma?' Unable to give a straightforward reply, the Rishi is compelled to resort to a play of words when he says; 'It so happens that gods themselves deviate from the path of virtue. However, just as a fire cannot be blamed for the destruction it causes, so also their sins do not adversely affect them.'

No right minded person can come to terms with the idea of a spiritual and religious guide leading such a perverted life, nor can he imagine a true religious leader presenting himself as the lord of all human beings and, indeed, the entire universe. A comparative study of the Qur'an and the Bible brings forth the fact that communities subject to intellectual and moral decline have sullied the images of the most pious souls to a deplorable extent in order to vindicate their own weaknesses, and have corrupted their biographies with myths and baseless folklore. We understand that the same might have been the case with Krishna as well, his original personality and teachings probably being quite contrary to what is being dished out in contemporary Hindu literature.

Of those people whose prophethood is widely established and renowned, it is Jesus Christ (May peace be upon him) who has had to bear the worst torrent of injustice. Jesus was no more than a human being, with all the qualities of manhood present in him just like those found in any other human. The only thing marking him out

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sermons, with no indication whatsoever of it being God's revealed book.

was that God had reposed him with wisdom, prophethood and status and delegated him to a wayward nation in order to reform them. To begin with, his community rejected him and could not tolerate his presence among them, to the point that they plotted to have him killed in the prime of his youth. Later, when they eventually realized his exalted position, they crossed all limits and declared him to be the begotten son of God; nay, God Himself! They then came up with a theory that God manifested Himself in the form of Jesus Christ so as to get crucified as a remittance for their sins; because man was a sinner by nature and hence could not attain salvation on his own accord. Moreover, they attributed this vague theory to Jesus Christ himself. God forbid! How could a true prophet level such allegations on his Lord? His disciples, however, driven by blind faith, fixed this charge on him, and giving in to their own vested desires, distorted his teachings to such an extent that we find no book today (with the exception of the Qur'an) that conveys the true personality and teachings of Jesus Christ.

Have a look at the four canonical gospels contained within the New Testament of the Bible. They are all contaminated with the filth of reincarnation, him being the son of God and even God himself! In Luke 1:35, Lady Mary is given glad tidings that her son would be called the Son of God. In Matthew 3:16 and 17, it is said that upon his baptism, Jesus saw the Spirit of God coming down like a dove and alighting on him. Then a voice said from heaven, "This is my own dear son, with whom I am pleased." In Mark 14:62, Jesus himself replies that he is indeed the son of God and you would see me seated on the right of the Almighty. In Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus Christ is depicted as being seated on the throne on the Day of Judgment instead of God, delivering sentences of rewards and punishments. In John 10:38, Jesus is quoted as saying that 'the Father is in me and I am in the Father'. In John 8:42, Jesus is reported to have said that 'I came from God'. In John 14:9-

10, Jesus and God have been unified and he is quoted as saying, 'Whoever has seen me has seen the Father' and 'The Father, who remains in me, does His own work'. While John 3:35 states that the Father loves His son and has put everything in his power, John 5:21-23 insists that God has delegated all his tasks to Christ!

The reason why these communities have levelled allegations against their leaders and guides is the same preponderance to excesses that follows blind faith that we have mentioned earlier. What further accentuated this problem was the fact that the teachings of these elders were usually never put down in writing, or even when they were written down, they were not properly preserved. This resulted in such mass distortions and additions and editing that it became impossible to differentiate the original from the fake. As the years passed by, myths overtook facts, and all the truth vanished within a few centuries, leaving behind fables and legends.

Exclusive of all the other guides the world has ever seen, it remains the distinguishing trait of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ alone that his personality and teachings are preserved in their original form even after thirteen centuries (more than fourteen centuries now... Tr.), and by God's grace, we now have a system in place that makes it impossible to alter them. It was not beyond man's love for the supernatural and his superstitious inclinations to make this exalted personality (who had reached the zenith of wonders) yet another fantasy and associate him with some form of divinity and worship him instead of following his teachings. However, God intended to conclude the chain of prophets with a universal guide who would serve as a lasting example for all humanity to follow. For this sake, He kept the personality of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ protected from the injustice that other leaders and guides have been subjected to by their disciples. To meet this requirement, the Prophet's companions, their followers and the

Muhaditheen (Hadith compilers)- in sharp contrast to the followers of previous prophets- went out of their way to meticulously preserve the life accounts of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. It is because of their sincere efforts that we can easily relate to the personality of the Prophet just as his contemporaries could, despite the intervening thirteen (Now fourteen. Tr.) centuries separating us from them. However, even if it so happens that the entire collection of Hadith, biographical and related literature compiled by Islamic scholars down the years that give us a glimpse of the life of the Prophet were to vanish from the face of the earth, and we are left with only the Qur'an, it would still suffice us in seeking the answers to all the fundamental questions that a student may have about its emissary.

Come; let us now consider how the Qur'an portrays its emissary, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

1. While discussing the topic of prophethood, the first point the Qur'an clarifies in detail is that the Prophet was a human being, a mortal. Since centuries preceding the Qur'an, it had become a widely accepted notion that a human being can never be the messenger or vicegerent of God. It was assumed that whenever the world requires reformation, God takes it upon Himself to take the form of a human being or sends an angel or demigod to eradicate evil. It was also ingrained in their minds that all the pious elders who have reformed the world were all superhuman personalities. This ideology was so deep rooted in people's minds that whenever a sincere servant of God preached God's message, they would feel astonished and sceptical at his seemingly mundane acts of eating, drinking, sleeping and walking around. 'What kind of a prophet is this man, who has to face the same difficulties as we do?' they would ask in jest. 'He falls sick, goes through hardship and ease, and gets affected by joy and sorrow! Had God indeed desired our rectification, why should He have sent us a

man who shares our natural weaknesses? Could God not Himself descend to us?' These were the very allegations hurled at every prophet, falling back on which, the community would reject the messengers.

When Prophet Noah (May peace be upon him) assumed the office of prophethood, his people said,

مَا هٰذَآ اِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُرِيْدُ اَنْ يَّتَفَضَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ لَاَنْزَلَ مَلٰٓئِكَةً مَّا سَمِعْنَا بِهٰذَا فِيْٓ اٰبَآئِنَا الْاَوَّلِيْنَ

"This is none other than a mortal like yourselves who desires to attain superiority over you. Had Allah wanted (to send any messenger) He would have sent down angels. We have heard nothing like this in the time of our forebears of old (that humans were sent as messengers)." (Surah alMu'minoon ayat 24)

When Prophet Hud (May peace be upon him) was sent as a guide to his people, he was welcomed with the same objection:

مَا هٰذَآ اِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يَاْكُلُ مِمَّا تَاْكُلُوْنَ مِنْهُ وَيَشْرَبُ مِمَّا تَشْرَبُوْنَ وَلَئِنْ اَطَعْتُمْ بَشَرًا مِّثْلَكُمْ اِنَّكُمْ اِذًا لَّخٰسِرُوْنَ

"This is no other than a mortal like yourselves who eats what you eat and drinks what you drink. And if you were to obey a human being like yourselves, you would certainly be losers."

(Surah alMu'minoon ayaat 33-34)

When the prophets Moses and Aaron (May peace be upon them) conveyed the true message to the Pharaoh, their call was rejected on the basis of the same argument:

اَنُؤْمِنُ لِبَشَرَيْنِ مِثْلِنَا

"Shall we put faith in two mortals like ourselves?"
(Surah alMu'minoon ayat 47)

Accordingly, the very same allegation cropped up when an illiterate resident of Makkah who had spent an uneventful forty years in the town suddenly announced that he had been appointed a messenger by God Almighty. The people couldn't fathom how a fellow citizen who appeared no different from them could be God's emissary. They would ask in disbelief,

وَقَالُوْا مَالِ هٰذَا الرَّسُوْلِ يَاْكُلُ الطَّعَامَ وَيَمْشِيْ فِي الْاَسْوَاقِ ۭ لَوْلَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْهِ مَلَكٌ فَيَكُوْنَ مَعَهٗ نَذِيْرًا ۝ اَوْ يُلْقٰٓى اِلَيْهِ كَنْزٌ اَوْ تَكُوْنُ لَهٗ جَنَّةٌ يَّاْكُلُ مِنْهَا ۭ

"And they say, "What sort of a messenger is this: he eats food and walks in the markets? Why was an angel not sent down to him so that he may remain with the Messenger and warn those that do not believe in him? Why was a treasure not bestowed upon him, or a garden whereof he might obtain his sustenance?"

(Surah alFurqan ayaat 7-8)

Since this misconception was turning out to be the principal barrier in accepting the prophethood of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, the Qur'an dispels it with full force, presenting a series of arguments to explain how and why a man can be the most suitable medium to reform other men. This is so because the purpose of appointing a prophet is not only to teach and proclaim, but to present a practical example whom others can easily emulate. If instead, an angel or superhuman being devoid of human qualities and weaknesses would have been sent, the people would have pleaded their inability to emulate such a person who neither possesses the natural human desires nor the natural inclination to sin that a human being is endued with.

لَّوْ كَانَ فِي الْاَرْضِ مَلٰۗىِٕكَةٌ يَّمْشُوْنَ مُطْمَىِٕنِّيْنَ لَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنَ السَّمَاۗءِ مَلَكًا رَّسُوْلًا ۝

"Had angels been walking about in peace on the earth, We would surely have sent to them an angel from the heavens as Messenger." (Surah Bani Israel ayat 95)

Moreover, it was made amply clear that all past prophets and guides sent to various communities were all human beings who used to eat, drink and walk around just like any other human being.

وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ اِلَّا رِجَالًا نُّوْحِيْٓ اِلَيْهِمْ فَسْـَٔلُوْٓا اَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝ وَمَا جَعَلْنٰهُمْ جَسَدًا لَّا يَاْكُلُوْنَ الطَّعَامَ وَمَا كَانُوْا خٰلِدِيْنَ ۝

"(O Muhammad), even before you We never sent any other than human beings as Messengers, and to them We sent revelation. Ask the People of the Book if you do not know. We did not endow the Messengers with bodies that would need no food; nor were they immortals." (Surah alAnbiyah ayaat 7-8)

وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ اِلَّآ اِنَّهُمْ لَيَاْكُلُوْنَ الطَّعَامَ وَيَمْشُوْنَ فِي الْاَسْوَاقِ

"We never sent any messengers before you but they ate food and walked about in the markets." (alFurqan:20)

وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلًا مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ اَزْوَاجًا وَّذُرِّيَّةً

"We indeed sent many messengers before you and We gave them wives and children." (Surah arRa'ad ayat 38)

Next, the Prophet was asked to unambiguously proclaim that he was a human being, so that his disciples could refrain from following the footsteps of past communities and end up associating him with divinity. To serve this purpose, the Qur'an reiterates this clause at many places:

قُلْ اِنَّمَآ اَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُوْحٰٓى اِلَيَّ اَنَّمَآ اِلٰهُكُمْ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ

"Say (O Muhammad), "I am no more than a human being like you; one to whom revelation is made: 'Your Lord is the One and Only God'."(Surah alKahf ayat 110)

These clarifications not only closed all avenues of distortion in ideology that could be associated with Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, but also cleared the air on the misunderstandings linked to all previous prophets and pious elders.

2. The second issue that has been deliberated upon is that of the Prophet's strengths and abilities. When ignorance linked a person's piety to divinity, it also inculcated the idea that such people ought to have extraordinary powers, some special authority before God, have a say in awarding rewards and punishments, enlightened with the manifest and the unseen aspects of the universe, that destinies are altered by their will and desire, they have an influence over profits and losses, they reign over good and evil, the powers of the universe are at their disposal and they have the ability to cast off the ignorance of people and change their hearts in the twinkling of an eye. Owing to these preconceptions, the people used to place vague demands before the Prophet ﷺ.

Accordingly, the Qur'an states,

وَقَالُوا لَنْ نُّؤْمِنَ لَكَ حَتّٰى تَفْجُرَ لَنَا مِنَ الْاَرْضِ يَنْۢبُوْعًا ﴿٩٠﴾ اَوْ تَكُوْنَ لَكَ جَنَّةٌ
مِّنْ نَّخِيْلٍ وَّعِنَبٍ فَتُفَجِّرَ الْاَنْهٰرَ خِلٰلَهَا تَفْجِيْرًا ﴿٩١﴾ اَوْ تُسْقِطَ السَّمَآءَ كَمَا زَعَمْتَ
عَلَيْنَا كِسَفًا اَوْ تَاْتِيَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ قَبِيْلًا ﴿٩٢﴾ اَوْ يَكُوْنَ لَكَ بَيْتٌ مِّنْ زُخْرُفٍ
اَوْ تَرْقٰى فِي السَّمَآءِ وَلَنْ نُّؤْمِنَ لِرُقِيِّكَ حَتّٰى تُنَزِّلَ عَلَيْنَا كِتٰبًا نَّقْرَؤُهٗ ۗ قُلْ
سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيْ هَلْ كُنْتُ اِلَّا بَشَرًا رَّسُوْلًا ﴿٩٣﴾

"And they say, "We shall not accept your message until you cause a spring to gush forth from the earth; or that there be a garden of palms and vines for you and then you cause rivers to abundantly flow through them; or cause the sky to fall on us in pieces as you claimed, or bring Allah and the angels before us, face to face; or that there come to be for you a house of gold, or that you ascend to the sky- though we shall not believe in

your ascension (to the sky)- until you bring down a book for us that we can read." Say to them, (O Muhammad): "Holy is my Lord! Am I anything else than a human being, who bears a message (from Allah)?" *(Surah Bani Israel ayaat 90-93)*

God has refuted all those misconceptions that people had regarding pious elders and made it clear that a prophet neither has any supernatural power, nor does he have any authority in divine matters whatsoever. It was explained that the prophet has no ability to protect himself from evil while superseding the will of God, let alone protect others from any harm.

وَاِنْ يَّمْسَسْكَ اللّٰهُ بِضُرٍّ فَلَا كَاشِفَ لَهٗۤ اِلَّا هُوَ ؕ وَاِنْ يَّمْسَسْكَ بِخَيْرٍ فَهُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿۱۷﴾

"Should Allah touch you with affliction; there is none to remove it but He;and should He touch you with good, He has the power to do everything."

(Surah alAn'am ayat 17)

قُلْ لَّاۤ اَمْلِكُ لِنَفْسِيْ ضَرًّا وَّلَا نَفْعًا اِلَّا مَا شَآءَ اللّٰهُ ؕ

"Tell them: I have no power to harm or benefit even myself, except what Allah may will."

(Surah Yunus ayat 49)

Further, it was said that neither does the prophet have the keys to divine treasures, nor is he in possession of the knowledge of the unseen or any supernatural power.

قُلْ لَّاۤ اَقُوْلُ لَكُمْ عِنْدِيْ خَزَآئِنُ اللّٰهِ وَلَاۤ اَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ وَلَاۤ اَقُوْلُ لَكُمْ اِنِّيْ مَلَكٌ ۚ اِنْ اَتَّبِعُ اِلَّا مَا يُوْحٰۤى اِلَيَّ ؕ

"Say, (O Muhammad), I do not say to you that I have the treasures of Allah; nor do I have knowledge of what is beyond the reach of perception; nor do I say to you that I am an angel. I only follow what is revealed to me." *(Surah alAn'am ayat 50)*

وَلَوْ كُنتُ أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ لَاسْتَكْثَرْتُ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ ۚ وَمَا مَسَّنِيَ السُّوءُ ۚ إِنْ أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ وَبَشِيرٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٨٨﴾

Tell then (O Muhammad): "I have no power to benefit or harm myself except as Allah may please. And had I knowledge of the Unseen, I should have amassed all kinds of good, and no evil would have ever touched me. I am merely a warner and the herald of glad tidings to those who have faith."

(Surah alA'araf ayat 188)

It was also told that the Prophet ﷺ had no say in awarding rewards and punishments; his task is only to convey the message and show the straight path. It is entirely upon God to requite people for their deeds and pass sentences on them.

قُلْ إِنِّي عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّي وَكَذَّبْتُم بِهِ ۚ مَا عِندِي مَا تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ بِهِ ۚ إِنِ الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ ۖ يَقُصُّ الْحَقَّ ۖ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْفَاصِلِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾ قُل لَّوْ أَنَّ عِندِي مَا تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ بِهِ لَقُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِالظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾

Say: "I take stand upon a Clear Evidence from my Lord and it is that which you have given the lie to. What you desire to be hastened is not within my power. Judgment lies with Allah alone. He declares the Truth, and He is the Best Judge." Say: "If what you demand so hastily were in my power, the matter between me and you would have long been decided. But Allah knows best how to judge the wrong doers."

(Surah alAn'am 57-58)

فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلَاغُ وَعَلَيْنَا الْحِسَابُ ﴿٤٠﴾

"your duty is no more than to convey the message, and it is for Us to make a reckoning."

(Surah alRa'ad ayat 40)

إِنَّآ أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ ٱلْكِتَٰبَ لِلنَّاسِ بِٱلْحَقِّ ۖ فَمَنِ ٱهْتَدَىٰ فَلِنَفْسِهِۦ ۖ وَمَن ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا ۖ وَمَآ أَنتَ عَلَيْهِم بِوَكِيلٍ ﴿٤١﴾

"(O Prophet), We revealed to you the Book with the Truth for all mankind. So he who follows the Right Way does so to his own benefit, and he who goes astray, shall hurt only himself by straying. You are not accountable on their behalf." (Surah azZumar ayat 41)

It was also said that it is beyond the scope of the Prophet to change the hearts of people or to infuse faith in their disbelieving hearts. His role as a guide is limited to preaching and reminding people with the resources at his disposal and to show the path to those who are willing to see it.

إِنَّكَ لَا تُسْمِعُ ٱلْمَوْتَىٰ وَلَا تُسْمِعُ ٱلصُّمَّ ٱلدُّعَآءَ إِذَا وَلَّوْا مُدْبِرِينَ ﴿٨٠﴾ وَمَآ أَنتَ بِهَٰدِى ٱلْعُمْىِ عَن ضَلَٰلَتِهِمْ ۖ إِن تُسْمِعُ إِلَّا مَن يُؤْمِنُ بِـَٔايَٰتِنَا فَهُم مُّسْلِمُونَ ﴿٨١﴾

"Surely you cannot make the dead hear you, nor can you make the deaf hear your call if they turn back in flight, nor can you direct the blind to the Right Way, preventing them from falling into error. You can make only those who believe in our Verses to hear the call and then submit." (Surah anNaml ayaat 80-81)

وَمَآ أَنتَ بِمُسْمِعٍ مَّن فِى ٱلْقُبُورِ ﴿٢٢﴾ إِنْ أَنتَ إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ ﴿٢٣﴾ إِنَّآ أَرْسَلْنَٰكَ بِٱلْحَقِّ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا ۚ

"you cannot cause to hear those who are in their graves. You are no more than a warner. We have sent you with the Truth to proclaim good news and to warn." (Surah Fatir ayaat 22-24)

Further, it was brought to the people's notice that the exalted status and honour enjoyed by the Prophet ﷺ was a result of his unflinching obedience to God and following the path shown to him and faithfully conveying the messages he receives from God to the

people. The Qur'an points out that if the Prophet were to disobey God or add salt and pepper to God's messages before conveying them to others, he would be stripped of his status and stand condemned in God's eyes.

وَلَئِنِ اتَّبَعْتَ أَهْوَاءَهُم مِّن بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِنَّكَ إِذًا لَّمِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٤٥﴾

"... Were you to follow their desires in disregard of the knowledge which has come to you, you will surely be reckoned among the wrongdoers."

(Surah alBaqarah ayat 145)

وَلَئِنِ اتَّبَعْتَ أَهْوَاءَهُم بَعْدَ الَّذِي جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ مَا لَكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِن وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ﴿١٢٠﴾

"... Should you follow their desires disregarding the knowledge which has come to you, you shall have no protector or helper against Allah."

(Surah alBaqarah ayat 120)

قُلْ مَا يَكُونُ لِي أَنْ أُبَدِّلَهُ مِن تِلْقَاءِ نَفْسِي إِنْ أَتَّبِعُ إِلَّا مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ إِنِّي أَخَافُ إِنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّي عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿١٥﴾

Tell them, (O Muhammad): "It is not for me to change it of my accord. I only follow what is revealed to me. Were I to disobey my Lord, I fear the chastisement of an Awesome Day." *(Surah Yunus ayat 15)*

The above passages should not be constructed to mean that there was any doubt regarding the Prophet's sincerity in delivering the message. In fact, the purpose was to make it clear to the world that the closeness accorded to the Prophet by the Lord of all honour was not because of any association that God had with the Prophet's person per se, rather this closeness was only because of the fact that he was extremely humble and obedient before God and served Him with all his heart and soul.

3. The third thing that the Qur'an stresses upon is that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is not a new prophet, but a member of the contingent of prophets and a link in the chain of prophets that is running since the beginning of humanity to his time and which includes prophets from every age and community. The Qur'an does not restrict the office of prophethood to any particular race, community or nation. Instead, it avers that God has appointed such pious and pure individuals from every community, nation and age who have called mankind to the straight path and warned them of the sad outcomes of ignorance and waywardness.

وَإِنْ مِّنْ أُمَّةٍ إِلَّا خَلَا فِيهَا نَذِيرٌ ﴿٢٤﴾

"Never has there been a nation but a warner came to it." *(Surah Fatir ayat 24)*

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَّسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ

We raised a Messenger in every community (to tell them): "Serve Allah and shun the Evil One."
(Surah anNahl ayat 36)

One of these messengers and warners is Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. This truth has been expounded upon in several places:

هَٰذَا نَذِيرٌ مِّنَ النُّذُرِ الْأُولَىٰ ﴿٥٦﴾

"This [Prophet] is a warner like the former warners."
(Surah anNajm ayat 56)

إِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿٣﴾

"You are truly among the messengers."
(Surah YaSeen ayat 3)

Tell them:

قُلْ مَا كُنتُ بِدْعًا مِّنَ الرُّسُلِ وَمَا أَدْرِي مَا يُفْعَلُ بِي وَلَا بِكُمْ ۖ إِنْ أَتَّبِعُ إِلَّا مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ وَمَا أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿٩﴾

"I am not the first of Messengers; and I do not know what shall be done with me or with you. I follow only what is revealed to me, and I am nothing but a plain warner." *(Surah alAhqaf ayat 9)*

وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ اِلَّا رَسُوْلٌ ۚ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ ۭ

"Muhammad is no more than messenger, and messengers have passed away before him."

(Surah Ale Imran ayat 144)

Not only this, it was also explained that the call and message of this prophet is the same as that of all past prophets and he is inviting you to the same natural *deen* that every previous prophet of God has invited to till date.

قُوْلُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْنَا وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلٰٓى اِبْرٰهٖمَ وَاِسْمٰعِيْلَ وَاِسْحٰقَ وَيَعْقُوْبَ وَالْاَسْبَاطِ وَمَآ اُوْتِيَ مُوْسٰى وَعِيْسٰى وَمَآ اُوْتِيَ النَّبِيُّوْنَ مِنْ رَّبِّهِمْ ۚ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ اَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ ۡ وَنَحْنُ لَهٗ مُسْلِمُوْنَ ۝ فَاِنْ اٰمَنُوْا بِمِثْلِ مَآ اٰمَنْتُمْ بِهٖ فَقَدِ اهْتَدَوْا ۚ

Say, [O believers], "We believe in Allah and what has been revealed to us and what has been revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the Descendants (of Jacob) and in what was given to Moses and Jesus and in what the other prophets received from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and we are those who submit to Allah." And if they come to believe as you believe, they are on right guidance....

(Surah alBaqarah ayaat 136-137)

These passages of the Qur'an also clarify the point that Prophet Muhammad had not been sent to falsify past prophets or alter the teachings of any of his predecessors in the very least bit. Instead, he had come to reintroduce the same message conveyed by past prophets to their communities all through the ages in its

most pristine form, cleansed of all the adulterations and interpolations made by previous generations in those messages.

4. Likewise, the Qur'an also expounds upon the mission that the Prophet ﷺ was entrusted with. His mission can be classified into two departments- educational and practical.

   - The educational aspect of his mission can be further elaborated thus:

1. Reciting the verses, purifying them and teaching them the book:

   لَقَدْ مَنَّ اللّٰهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اِذْ بَعَثَ فِيْهِمْ رَسُوْلًا مِّنْ اَنْفُسِهِمْ يَتْلُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ وَيُزَكِّيْهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ ۚ وَاِنْ كَانُوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ لَفِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿١٦٤﴾

   "Surely Allah conferred a great favour on the believers when He raised from among them a Messenger to recite to them His signs, and to purify them, and to teach them the Book and Wisdom. For before that, they were in manifest error."

   (Surah Ale Imran ayat 164)

   'Reciting the verses' entails faithfully conveying the decrees and commandments of God to the people, 'purifying them' means rectifying their lives, replacing ill-conduct, false rituals and practices with high morals, good conduct and right practices. 'Teaching them the Book and wisdom' is to explain the arguments and motives behind Qur'anic injunctions, make the people capable of reaching the true spirit of the Qur'an and to teach them the wisdom that would allow them to follow the Qur'an in all walks of life.

2. Perfection of *deen*

ٱلْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِى وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ
ٱلْإِسْلَٰمَ دِينًا

"This day I have perfected for you your deen and have bestowed upon you My Bounty in full measure, and have been pleased to assign for you Islam as your deen." *(Surah alMaidah ayat 3)*

In other words, the Prophet ﷺ was not only commissioned to recite the verses, purify them and teach them the book; but through him, God has also perfected His message and conveyed all He wished to convey to mankind, presented the required virtues expected from the individual and collective lives of men and women, and delivered them from all the evils plaguing human society through his illustrious example, instructing them in the Book and wisdom in such an effective way that all future generations might easily mould their lives as per divine injunctions.

3. Resolve the differences that had erupted among the followers of past prophets regarding the true faith, lift the veils, clear the misinterpretations and make evident the only true path that has always led and would always lead to God's pleasure and grace.

تَٱللَّهِ لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَآ إِلَىٰٓ أُمَمٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ فَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ ٱلشَّيْطَٰنُ أَعْمَٰلَهُمْ فَهُوَ
وَلِيُّهُمُ ٱلْيَوْمَ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٦٣﴾ وَمَآ أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ ٱلْكِتَٰبَ إِلَّا لِتُبَيِّنَ لَهُمُ
ٱلَّذِى ٱخْتَلَفُوا۟ فِيهِ ۙ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾

"By Allah, (O Muhammad), We did certainly send [messengers] to other communities before you, but Satan made their evil deeds attractive to them (so they paid no heed to the call of the messengers). The same Satan is their patron today and they are heading towards a painful chastisement. We have sent down the Book that you may explain to them the truth concerning what they are disputing and that the Book

may serve as a guidance and mercy for those who believe in it." *(Surah anNahl ayaat 63-64)*

يَاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ قَدْ جَآءَكُمْ رَسُوْلُنَا يُبَيِّنُ لَكُمْ كَثِيْرًا مِّمَّا كُنْتُمْ تُخْفُوْنَ مِنَ الْكِتٰبِ وَيَعْفُوْا عَنْ كَثِيْرٍ قَدْ جَآءَكُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ نُوْرٌ وَّكِتٰبٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿۱۵﴾ يَّهْدِيْ بِهِ اللّٰهُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَهٗ سُبُلَ السَّلٰمِ وَيُخْرِجُهُمْ مِّنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوْرِ بِاِذْنِهٖ وَيَهْدِيْهِمْ اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ﴿۱۶﴾

"O People of the Book! Now Our Messenger has come to you: he makes clear to you a good many things of the Book which you were wont to conceal, and also passes over many things. There has now come to you a light from Allah, and a Clear Book through which Allah shows to all who seek to please Him the paths leading to safety. He brings them out, by His leave, from darknesses to Light and directs them on to the Straight Way" *(Surah alMaidah ayaat 15-16)*

4. Warn the disobedient, give glad tidings of God's mercy to the obedient souls and to propagate the *deen* of God.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ اِنَّآ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ شَاهِدًا وَّمُبَشِّرًا وَّنَذِيْرًا ﴿۴۵﴾ وَّدَاعِيًا اِلَى اللّٰهِ بِاِذْنِهٖ وَسِرَاجًا مُّنِيْرًا ﴿۴۶﴾

"O Prophet, We have sent you forth as a witness, a bearer of good tidings, and a warner, as one who calls people to Allah by His leave, and as a bright, shining lamp." *(Surah alAhzab ayaat 45-46)*

- The second aspect of his mission pertains to practical life and its issues and entails the following responsibilities:

   1. Enjoining virtue, forbidding evil, marking out the permitted from the prohibited and to liberate man from the restraining shackles and yokes of other men:

يَأْمُرُهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهٰهُمْ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُحِلُّ لَهُمُ الطَّيِّبٰتِ وَيُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَبٰٓئِثَ وَيَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ اِصْرَهُمْ وَالْاَغْلٰلَ الَّتِيْ كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ فَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِهٖ وَعَزَّرُوْهُ وَنَصَرُوْهُ وَاتَّبَعُوا النُّوْرَ الَّذِيْٓ اُنْزِلَ مَعَهٗٓ ۙ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿۱۵۷﴾

"(He) enjoins upon them what is good and forbids them what is evil. He makes the clean things lawful for them and prohibits all corrupt things and removes from them their burdens and the shackles that were upon them. So those who believe in him and assist him, and succour him and follow the Light which has been sent down with him, it is they who shall prosper." (Surah alA'araf ayat 157)

2. To judge between people with truth and justice:

اِنَّآ اَنْزَلْنَآ اِلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ بِالْحَقِّ لِتَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِمَآ اَرٰىكَ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَلَا تَكُنْ لِّلْخَآئِنِيْنَ خَصِيْمًا ﴿۱۰۵﴾

"Indeed, We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], this Book with the Truth so that you may judge between people in accordance with what Allah has shown you. So do not dispute on behalf of the dishonest." (Surah anNisa ayat 105)

3. To establish the *deen* of God in such a manner that it dominates over all aspects of human life and subjugates all other systems.

هُوَ الَّذِيْٓ اَرْسَلَ رَسُوْلَهٗ بِالْهُدٰى وَدِيْنِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهٗ عَلَى الدِّيْنِ كُلِّهٖ ؕ

"It is He who sent His Messenger with the True Guidance and the deen of truth that he may make it prevail over all other forms of deen. And sufficient is Allah as Witness (to this)." (Surah alFath ayat 28)

Thus, his mission encompasses all aspects of politics, judiciary, reformation of conduct and civil society and establishment of a morally advanced culture.

4. This mission of the Prophet was not bound by any specific age or community; rather it traversed the boundaries of time and space.

وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ اِلَّا كَآفَّةً لِّلنَّاسِ بَشِيْرًا وَّنَذِيْرًا وَّلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝۲۸

"And We have not sent you forth but as a herald of good news and a warner for all mankind. But most of the people do not know." *(Surah Saba ayat 28)*

قُلْ يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اِنِّىْ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ اِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيْعًا الَّذِىْ لَهٗ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۚ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ يُحْيٖ وَيُمِيْتُ فَاٰمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهِ النَّبِيِّ الْاُمِّيِّ الَّذِيْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَكَلِمٰتِهٖ وَاتَّبِعُوْهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُوْنَ ۝۱۵۸

Say, [O Muhammad], "O people! I am the Messenger of Allah to you all, [of Him] to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. There is no God but He; He gives life and deals death. So have faith in Allah and His Messenger, the unlettered prophet, who believes in Allah and His words, and follow him that you may be guided aright". *(Surah alA'araf ayat 158)*

وَاُوْحِيَ اِلَيَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنُ لِاُنْذِرَكُمْ بِهٖ وَمَنْۢ بَلَغَ ۭ

"And this Qur'an was revealed to me that I may warn you thereby and also whomever it may reach." *(Surah alAn'am ayat 19)*

اِنْ هُوَ اِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۝۲۷ لِمَنْ شَاۗءَ مِنْكُمْ اَنْ يَّسْتَقِيْمَ ۝۲۸

"It is nothing but Good Counsel for everyone in the world, for everyone of you who wishes to follow the straight way." *(Surah alTakweer ayat 27-28)*

5. A striking feature of the prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ, as related in the Qur'an, is that the series of prophets and messengers culminates with him and the world would no longer be in need of any new prophet.

مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَآ أَحَدٍ مِّن رِّجَالِكُمْ وَلَٰكِن رَّسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّـۧنَ

"Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but [he is] the Messenger of Allah and seal of the prophets." *(Surah alAhzab ayat 40)*

This is actually a natural outcome of the universal appeal of Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ mission and the completion and perfection of *deen*. The aforementioned passages of the Qur'an inform us that the prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ is applicable for the whole of mankind and for all times, not just for any particular community or era. Also, we note that the task with which all previous prophets had been commissioned has been perfected and completed by means of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Hence, it is obvious that the series of prophethood has also been culminated with his prophethood. This fact had been elaborated by none other than the Prophet himself in a Hadith, wherein he states that "My similitude in comparison with the prophets before me is that of a man who has built a house nicely and beautifully, except for a place of one brick in a corner. The people go about it and wonder at its beauty, but say: 'Would that this brick be put in its place!' So I am that brick, and I am the seal of the prophets, there is no prophet after me." This parable explains why the office of prophethood has been done away with. This is essentially because *deen* has now been perfected, God's message has been clearly conveyed and all matters related to man's individual and collective life- rules pertaining to permitted and forbidden entities, articles of faith and modes of worship, culture and civilization, governance and politics et al. have been laid down, and God's message along with the pristine example of the prophet has been presented before the world in its pure unadulterated form, making it an easily available source of guidance for all times to come.

6. We now come to the final question, that pertaining to the personal traits of the prophet who has delivered the

Qur'an to us. Contrary to the practice found in other contemporary religious books, the Qur'an makes no concerted attempt at eulogizing the Prophet ﷺ nor dedicates an entire passage just to praise him. Instead, it casually touches upon the sublime morals of the prophet while discussing an issue, bringing to light the existence of the best of human qualities that the Prophet was endowed with.

a) The Qur'an says that its emissary was in possession of a high moral character.

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلٰى خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ ۝٤

"And you are certainly on the most exalted standard of moral excellence." *(Surah alQalam ayat 4)*

b) It says that the Messenger was a devoted and dedicated man, who reposed all his trust in God even when his community tried to assassinate him and he was compelled to seek refuge in a small cave, with only a friend to accompany him.

إِذْ أَخْرَجَهُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ثَانِيَ اثْنَيْنِ إِذْ هُمَا فِي الْغَارِ إِذْ يَقُولُ لِصَاحِبِهِ لَا تَحْزَنْ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ مَعَنَا

... When those who disbelieved had driven him out of his home and he was but one of the two when they were in the cave, and he said to his companion, "Do not grieve; indeed Allah is with us."

(Surah atTaubah ayat 40)

c) It says that the Prophet was a kind and generous person who even prayed for the deliverance of his worst enemies, to the point that God had to categorically tell him that He was not going to forgive them.

اِسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ اَوْ لَا تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ ۭ اِنْ تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ سَبْعِيْنَ مَرَّةً فَلَنْ يَّغْفِرَ اللّٰهُ لَهُمْ ۭ

"(O Prophet), it is all the same whether or not you ask for their forgiveness. Even if you were to ask forgiveness for them seventy times - Allah shall not forgive them." *(Surah atTaubah ayat 80)*

d) It tells us that he was a very gentle person who was never harsh with anyone; this made him loved by one and all.

فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ ۚ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيْظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانْفَضُّوْا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ ۠

"(O Prophet), it was thanks to Allah's mercy that you were gentle to them. Had you been rough, hard-hearted, they would surely have scattered away from you." *(Surah Ale Imran ayat 159)*

e) It says that the Prophet had a sincere urge to rectify the conduct of fellow human beings and their persistence on ignorance was a cause of immense distress to him.

فَلَعَلَّكَ بَاخِعٌ نَّفْسَكَ عَلٰٓى اٰثَارِهِمْ اِنْ لَّمْ يُؤْمِنُوْا بِهٰذَا الْحَدِيْثِ اَسَفًا ۝

"(O Muhammad), if they do not believe in this message, you will perhaps torment yourself to death with grief, sorrowing over them." *(Surah alKahf ayat 6)*

f) It says that its emissary had a deep sense of love for his people, who longed for their sake and was grieved at their loss... a personification of compassion and mercy.

لَقَدْ جَآءَكُمْ رَسُوْلٌ مِّنْ اَنْفُسِكُمْ عَزِيْزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنِتُّمْ حَرِيْصٌ عَلَيْكُمْ

بِالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ رَءُوْفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ۝

"There has come to you a Messenger of Allah from among yourselves, who is distressed by the losses you sustain, who is ardently desirous of your welfare and is tender and merciful to those that believe."

(Surah atTaubah ayat 128)

g) It says that he was a source of mercy not only for his own community, but for the entire humanity.

وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنٰكَ اِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۝

"We have sent you forth as nothing but as a mercy to people of the whole world." (Surah alAnbiya ayat 107)

h) It says that the messenger used to spend long hours of the night engrossed in worship, remembering his Lord.

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَعْلَمُ أَنَّكَ تَقُومُ أَدْنَىٰ مِن ثُلُثَيِ اللَّيْلِ وَنِصْفَهُ وَثُلُثَهُ

"(O Prophet), your Lord knows that you sometimes stand up in prayer nearly two-thirds of the night, and sometimes half or one-third of it."

(Surah Muzammil ayat 20)

i) It says that its emissary was a man of truth, neither did he sway from the straight path in his life, nor was he ever influenced by corrupt ideologies, nor did he ever utter a word of injustice to pander to his own desires.

مَا ضَلَّ صَاحِبُكُمْ وَمَا غَوَىٰ ۝ وَمَا يَنطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ ۝

"Your companion has neither strayed, nor is he deluded, nor does he speak out of his own desire."

(Surah anNajm ayat 2-3)

j) It says that the messenger was an example worth emulating for people all over the world, his life being the standard that one should aspire to attain.

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ

"Surely there was a good example for you in the Messenger of Allah...." (Surah alAhzab ayat 21)

A deep study of the Qur'an leads us to many more qualities of its emissary, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, but we shall suffice at this list for the sake of brevity. Any sincere student of comparative religious literature would discern for himself how, in sharp contrast to other contemporary religious books, the Qur'anic portrayal of its emissary is clear, transparent and free of blemish. Neither is there any hint of divinity, nor any exaggeration of praise, nor are there any unrealistic or extraordinary qualities been attributed to him, nor has he been made privy or partner in divine affairs, nor yet has he been accused of falling prey to

such weaknesses that can never be deemed compatible with a guide and prophet. Even if all other Islamic literature were to disappear from the face of the earth, leaving only the Qur'an behind, there would not be any misunderstanding, doubt or misgiving with regard to the personality of the Prophet ﷺ. We can ascertain for sure that the emissary of this book was a complete human being, endowed with the highest moral character, testified to the authenticity of past prophets, was not the founder of a new religion and never held claim to a superhuman status. He called on all humanity to accept his call, without favour or prejudice. He was commissioned by God to discharge certain duties; fulfilling which, the office of prophethood was done away with forever.[1]

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[1] This article was penned down in 1927 for the Habeeb special issue of the Delhi newspaper, 'Al-Jamiyat'. This was then republished in Tarjumanul Qur'an in 1944.

The Story of David (Peace be upon him) and Jewish distortions

A few weeks back, one of the readers of Tarjuman ul Qur'an raised some doubts over the story of Prophet David (Peace be upon him) that has been narrated in the second *ruku* (section) of Surah Saad[1](صٓ). Although he had been offered a brief reply immediately, it later occurred to me that this Qur'anic narration is one of those passages whose beauty and richness had been obscured by corrupt, blasphemous Jewish traditions, usually causing doubts and serious misgivings in the minds of those people who happen to refer to those translations and exegeses *(tafaseer)* of the Qur'an that have been influenced by such profane traditions. Hence, it becomes important to write a detailed article on this topic so that people may be introduced to the true elucidation of this Qur'anic narration and the benefits it holds for us.

Surah Saad (صٓ) begins with the subject that the disbelievers reject the message being conveyed by the Prophet ﷺ on the mere basis of arrogance and ancestral tradition. In reply, God cites the examples of the people of Noah and Aad, Pharaoh and Thamud, Sodom and the people of Shoaib to remind them that His divine law does not exempt anyone; 'those who had disobeyed My commandments before you were met with dire consequences and if now you were to disobey Me, you would also meet with a similar punishment'.

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[1] As a matter of fact, certain early exegeses actually do narrate this incident in a manner that would naturally stir up apprehensions in the minds of their readers.

Continuing with this admonishment, God further says, 'Such is the uncompromising nature of Our law that We do not excuse even the greatest of men, even prophets and messengers, if they ever deviate from Our commands to the slightest extent, let alone common folk like yourselves.' وَاذْكُرْ عَبْدَنَا دَاوٗدَ *"O Prophet, convey to them the story of Our servant, David."*(Saad:17) How exalted was his status! ذَا الْاَيْدِ *A man of great power!* (Saad:17) Bestowed with great blessings! Moreover, اِنَّهٗۤ اَوَّابٌ۝ *he was an extremely devout and pious man, always turning towards his Lord.* (Saad:17)

اِنَّا سَخَّرْنَا الْجِبَالَ مَعَهٗ يُسَبِّحْنَ بِالْعَشِيِّ وَالْاِشْرَاقِ۝ وَالطَّيْرَ مَحْشُوْرَةً ؕ كُلٌّ لَّهٗۤ اَوَّابٌ۝ وَشَدَدْنَا مُلْكَهٗ وَاٰتَيْنٰهُ الْحِكْمَةَ وَفَصْلَ الْخِطَابِ۝

> *"With him We had subjected the mountains that they join him in celebrating Allah's glory, evening and morning, and the birds, too, in their flocks, and turn again and again to celebrate Allah's glory. And We strengthened his kingdom and endowed him with wisdom and decisive judgment."* [Surah Saad, ayaat 18-20]

But do you know My response when he happened to slip in a particular matter?

وَهَلْ اَتٰىكَ نَبَؤُا الْخَصْمِ ۘ اِذْ تَسَوَّرُوا الْمِحْرَابَ۝ اِذْ دَخَلُوْا عَلٰى دَاوٗدَ فَفَزِعَ مِنْهُمْ قَالُوْا لَا تَخَفْ ۚ خَصْمٰنِ بَغٰى بَعْضُنَا عَلٰى بَعْضٍ فَاحْكُمْ بَيْنَنَا بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا تُشْطِطْ وَاهْدِنَاۤ اِلٰى سَوَآءِ الصِّرَاطِ۝

> *Has the story of the litigants reached you- of those who entered his private chambers by climbing over the wall? As they came upon David- and he was frightened of them- they said: Be not afraid. We are just two litigants: one of us has committed excess against the other. So judge rightly between us, and be not unjust; and guide us to the Right Way."*
>
> *(Surah Saad ayaat 21-22)*

What was the case? One of the litigants pointed towards the other and said:

إِنَّ هٰذَآ أَخِيْ لَهٗ تِسْعٌ وَّتِسْعُوْنَ نَعْجَةً وَّلِيَ نَعْجَةٌ وَّاحِدَةٌ فَقَالَ أَكْفِلْنِيْهَا وَعَزَّنِيْ فِي الْخِطَابِ ﴿٢٣﴾

"Behold, this is my brother; he has ninety-nine ewes and I have only one ewe. And yet he said: 'Give her into my charge', and he got the better of me in argument." *(Surah Saad ayat 23)*

Upon hearing the petition, David (Peace be upon him) exclaims:

لَقَدْ ظَلَمَكَ بِسُؤَالِ نَعْجَتِكَ إِلٰى نِعَاجِهٖ وَإِنَّ كَثِيْرًا مِّنَ الْخُلَطَآءِ لَيَبْغِيْ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ إِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ وَقَلِيْلٌ مَّا هُمْ

"He has certainly wronged you in seeking to add your ewe to his ewes; and indeed many who live together commit excesses, one to the other, except those that believe and act righteously; and they are but few."
(Surah Saad ayat 24)

After pronouncing this judgment, it suddenly dawned upon David that he himself has committed a similar error. Thereupon, he started trembling with the fear of God and started repenting fervently:

وَظَنَّ دَاوٗدُ أَنَّمَا فَتَنّٰهُ فَاسْتَغْفَرَ رَبَّهٗ وَخَرَّ رَاكِعًا وَّأَنَابَ ﴿٢٤﴾

"David realized that it is We who have put him to test; therefore he sought the forgiveness of his Lord, and fell down, bowing and penitently turning (to Him)."
(Surah Saad ayat 24)

Now that David had accepted his lapse and sincerely sought forgiveness, God revealed:

فَغَفَرْنَا لَهٗ ذٰلِكَ وَإِنَّ لَهٗ عِنْدَنَا لَزُلْفٰى وَحُسْنَ مَاٰبٍ ﴿٢٥﴾

"Thereupon We forgave him his shortcoming and indeed (an exalted position of) nearness awaits him, and an excellent resort." *(Surah Saad ayat 25)*

In the same breath, We also strictly admonished him thus:

يٰدَاوٗدُ اِنَّا جَعَلْنٰكَ خَلِيْفَةً فِى الْاَرْضِ فَاحْكُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعِ الْهَوٰى فَيُضِلَّكَ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ۭ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَضِلُّوْنَ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيْدٌۢ بِمَا نَسُوْا يَوْمَ الْحِسَابِ ۝

"O David, We have appointed you vicegerent on earth. Therefore, rule among people and do not follow (your) desire lest it should lead you astray from Allah's path. Allah's severe chastisement awaits those who stray away from Allah's Path, for they had forgotten the Day of Reckoning." *(Surah Saad ayat 26)*

As has already been mentioned in the beginning of this article, the primary purpose of narrating this incident in Surah Saad (ص) is to make it amply clear to those who do not fear God and are ignorant of his impartial law that God is extremely just in his dispensation and does not allow any concession in anyone's favour; that the slightest of disobedience would be brought to book without any regard to the status of the offender. The only thing that can save such a person from God's punishment is his heartfelt repentance, sincerely turning back to Him and adopting an attitude of humility in front of God instead of showing arrogance. But there is one more purpose behind this narration here, and that is to vindicate a great prophet from the onslaught of Jewish fabrications.

It is a well established fact that Jews have indulged in the character assassination of their own prophets, exhibiting no restraint in sullying their pure images. Prophets Noah, Abraham, Lot, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron (Peace be upon them all) have all been subjected to their insults.[1]

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[1] Those interested in knowing the details can refer the following passages from the Bible:

- About Noah: Genesis, Chapter 9 verses 20-25

But their worst injustice was reserved for Prophets David and Solomon (Peace be upon them) in that they demoted them from the position of prophets, relegating them to the status of ordinary kings. They are presented as diplomats, expansionists and strategists, who resorted to lies, deceit and injustice and employed all those resources that are usually employed by the world's conquerors, and go to all lengths to satisfy their carnal desires, just like any other king would do. The Jews have even accused David of adultery and Solomon of polytheism[1].

This is their attitude with regard to those pious men who lifted them out of the abyss of humiliation and elevated them to the summits of honour. The historical events this community prides itself over today have been made possible by these same elders, who are now, ironically, the targets of their insults.

The Qur'an is the only book on the face of the earth that has cleared the position of each of these prophets and made the people aware of their true status. Had the Qur'an not been revealed, not one person would have taken their names with respect today, let alone honoured them as prophets. The Jews might not acknowledge this favour, but their refusal to acknowledge it does not make it any less of a favour!

The first error the Jews have committed with regard to David (Peace be upon him) is that they do not recognize

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- About Abraham: Genesis, Chapter 12 verses 10-13, Chapter 20 verses 1-3
- About Lot: Genesis, Chapter 19 verses 30-38
- About Isaac: Genesis, Chapter 26 , verses 117
- About Jacob: Genesis, Chapter 27 verse 19, Chapter 29 verses 16-30, Chapter 34, Chapter 35 verse 22
- About Joseph: Genesis, Chapter 37 verses 2-4
- About Moses: Numbers, Chapter 31 verses 1-18
- About Aaron: Exodus, Chapter 32 verses 1-24

[1] Refer Kings-1 Chapter 11 verses 1-10

him as their prophet, but merely as their national hero[1]. The Qur'an rectifies this stand and avers that he was a great prophet whom God had granted a high status. Accordingly, it mentions David and Solomon in the list of Abraham's descendants and says, كُلٌّ مِّنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿﴾ *"Each one of them was of the righteous"* (Surah alAn'am ayat 85), وَكُلًّا فَضَّلْنَا عَلَى الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿﴾ *"Each one of them We favoured over all mankind."* (Surah alAn'am ayat 86), وَاجْتَبَيْنٰهُمْ وَهَدَيْنٰهُمْ اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ﴿﴾ *"Likewise We elected (them) for Our cause and guided (them) on to a straight way."* (Surah alAn'am ayat 87), اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰتَيْنٰهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ ۚ *"Those are the ones to whom We gave the Book and judgment and prophethood."* (Surah alAn'am ayat 89). After this, Prophet Muhammad is instructed thus: اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ هَدَى اللّٰهُ فَبِهُدٰىهُمُ اقْتَدِهْ ۚ *"Those are the ones Allah guided to the right way. Follow, then, their way...."* (Surah alAn'am ayat 90).

The second assault made on David's character was with regard to the wife of Uriah, the Hittite. The 11th and 12th chapters of the Book of Samuel 2 contain the entire narration, a gist of which is presented here:

> *One day, late in the afternoon, David got up from his nap and went to the palace roof. As he walked about up there, he saw a beautiful woman having a bath. She was very beautiful. So he sent a messenger to find out who she was, and learnt that she was Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and the wife of Uriah the Hittite. David sent the messengers to fetch her; they brought her to him and he made love to her. Then she went back home. Afterwards she discovered that she was pregnant and sent a message to David to tell him.*
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> *(Samuel, Chapter 11: verses 2-5)*

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[1] The Bible only speaks of him as a king nominated by God for the Children of Israel and that the prophet of his time had anointed him in obedience to God, which, according to the Israelites, meant that he had been appointed by God.

'David wrote a letter to Joab (who was then at war with the Ammonites and had besieged the city of Rabbah) and sent it by Uriah. He wrote: 'Put Uriah in the front line, where the fighting is heaviest, then retreat and let him be killed.' So while Joab was besieging the city, he sent Uriah to a place where he knew the enemy was strong... and Uriah was killed.

(Ibid: verses 14-17)

Thus, having Uriah killed, David married his widow Bathsheba who bore him his son, Solomon.

But the Lord was not pleased with what David had done. He sent the prophet Nathan to David. Nathan went to him and said, "There were two men who lived in the same town; one was rich and the other poor. The rich man had many cattle and sheep, while the poor man had only one lamb, which he had bought. He took care of it... and loved it like his daughter. One day, a visitor arrived at the rich man's house. The rich man did not want to kill one of his own animals to prepare a meal for him; instead, he took the poor man's lamb and cooked a meal for his guest. David was very angry with the rich man and said, "I swear by the living Lord that the man who did this ought to die. For having done such a cruel thing, he must pay back four times as much as he took." "You are that man," Nathan said to David (and reminded him of the Hittite's episode).

(Samuel Chapter 12 verses 1-7)

In this story, David has been portrayed as such a morally debased person that it seems outright shameful for any king to do so, let alone a prophet of God. This story gained currency among the Jews and used to be counted among the most important events of David's life. A lot of folklore was attached to this story and narrated with much fun and ridicule. It was not possible for the Qur'an to ignore such a character assassination of a prophet of such high stature. Hence, along with delivering a wise

instruction, the Qur'an spells out the actual incident and lays bare the distortions made therein.

What can be understood from the Qur'anic narrative is that David had simply asked Uriah (or whatever his name had been) to divorce his wife. Subdued by the position held by David, Uriah felt compelled to divorce his wife in David's favour. Now, before he could divorce her, two righteous men suddenly appeared before David and presented the case in the form of a fictitious petition. After listening to the plaintiff's plea, David pronounced the most appropriate judgment. However, he soon realized that this was his Lord trying him, so he immediately repented before God in all humility and sought His pardon.

When we reflect upon the Bible's narrative in this regard, we can very well understand how the original incident must have been draped with layers of rumours and scandalous whispers.

It is the nature of indecent and evil people that when they happen to come across a matter (of however little significance) related to a person, especially a person who holds some stature, their perverted minds begin to imagine many vague possibilities and they begin to propagate them as ascertained facts. Every person- no matter how great- does commit some acts in his life that can easily be misrepresented to tarnish his image. What David (Peace be upon him) had done was a routine practice among the Jews.[1] But since it had been practiced by a man of stature, its news spread like wildfire and people began adding their

[1] The Israelites did not consider it immoral if a person requested another person to divorce his wife so that he could marry her. Neither would the person putting up this request feel uncomfortable nor would the person to whom such a request would be made feel offended. Rather, it was considered quite virtuous of a person if he divorced his wife and married her off to his friend, for this act of his would grant his friend pleasure or relief (as the case may be). Accordingly, it was a reflection of this Jewish 'virtue' that certain Ansaar from Madinah had offered to divorce their wives so that their migrant brothers (Muhajireen) could marry them.

own tales to it. The fact that David had asked Uriah to divorce his wife was considered sufficient to assume that David had been attracted to her. Now people started speculating how he must have got attracted to her. Some person may have come up with the theory that he must have seen her bathing from his rooftop. But this 'must have seen' was conveniently turned into 'had seen' when these *chaste* souls narrated it to others. Multiple other baseless whispers began to take the shape of a well-constructed story. It should be taken into consideration that his attraction towards Uriah's wife may have had many other reasons. It is quite possible that David must have been impressed by accounts of this lady's virtues and abilities. But it is in the nature of evil minds to veer towards evil possibilities.

Now that people were certain that David was attracted to that lady, it did not seem plausible to their perverse minds that a monarch who is attracted to a lady would not lay his hands on her. Hence, they were convinced that the monarch must have sent for her and must have surely slept with her. This 'must have' also soon turned into 'did', with the story of her pregnancy added to spice it up.

The Jewish nation was then a vibrant community that had members who did not feel ashamed or reluctant at approaching men of howsoever high a status and making them realize their mistakes. When this story started spreading, two men from the community approached David and sought to admonish him through the medium of a parable. Accordingly, David at once turned penitent. However, either the people remained unaware of his penitence, or their perversions could not lead them to believe in it. In any case, after his penitence, David forgot about Uriah's wife, but the community could not forget her. Uriah was a soldier; there was nothing extraordinary about his posting in the battle or his eventual martyrdom in the line of duty. But since the incident about his wife was fresh in their minds and their immoral minds could not

differentiate between a prophet's kingship and a licentious person's kingship, Uriah's death on the battlefield led to a new round of rumours. Connecting the dots, they assumed that since David was in love with Uriah's wife and had the official powers to have Uriah killed and acquire his wife; he must have deliberately sent Uriah to the frontlines of the battlefield to have him killed. This 'must have' also soon evolved into 'did', with the letter written to Joab being another figment of their imagination.

There is nothing strange or unlawful for a man who likes a woman to marry her when she happens to get widowed. But when David married Bathsheba (as written in the Bible), the Jews were quick to see this as a vindication of all the rumours that were doing the rounds. Despite the fact that the context of this incident was open to probabilities, the Jews opted to go by the call of their corrupted instinct. It is quite possible that a man may not have gone out of his way to acquire the woman of his desire and may have married her when only when she was widowed, seeing no moral or legal hurdle preventing him from doing so; and it is also possible that he must have resorted to a sinister plan to acquire her. One probability can never be ruled out in favour of the other without the existence of any proof or witness. It is on such occasions that man's intentions are laid bare. A man of sound nature would always incline towards the healthier possibility, and if such an incident concerns an upright and pious individual, he would always rule in his favour[1]. On the other hand, a person of filthy mentality always seeks filth and, by nature, he always seems inclined towards the unhealthy possibility. Such a person would not change his

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[1] David's entire life can be presented to support a favourable inclination. The biography of David can be found in the Bible preceding and following this particular narration. Going through it, any man can reach a conclusion that such a meritorious and pious man can never have been guilty of the charges levelled against him.

mind even when he is presented with proofs contrary to his opinion.

At this stage, we see a vast difference between the stand of the Qur'an and the Bible. The Qur'an presents the life of a hero from the Children of Israel in the most illuminated manner, not leaving a single blemish on his character unwashed. The Bible which is touted to be most holy in the eyes of the Jews, however, does not depict the image of their hero in the way as it should emerge in the minds of pure-hearted men. Instead, it portrays him in a manner that could appeal only to the most morally deranged person of the community. The Jews and Christians regard this book as divine; but similar such abominations can be found throughout this book that cannot be attributed even to a sound-minded man, let alone God!

To truly appreciate the malicious nature of Jews, one needs to see their reaction when the Qur'an absolved their own prophets of all the aspersions that had been cast on them. The Jews, became distressed instead of being happy, challenged the Qur'anic claims instead of expressing their gratitude, and resorted to again tarnish the images of those prophets after the Qur'an had rendered them clean. The Jews were present in Madinah when the Qur'an was being revealed, and within a few years, the Muslims came in contact with many more Jews spread across vast stretches of Asia and Africa. They started spreading their same old stories about past prophets among Muslims as well. This resulted in their mark being felt in many an exegesis of the Qur'an written down by Muslims, a fact agreed upon by those who engage in the cross-study of multiple exegeses. This holds true for the narration of David's (Peace be upon him) story as well. The Jews of Madinah had spread the story of Uriah's wife so widely among the Muslims that people wrote the exegesis of the Qur'an under the influence of Biblical narratives and these distorted Jewish traditions. This proceeded to such an extent that the true interpretation

of the Qur'an faced a danger of being corrupted, compelling Caliph Ali (Allah be pleased with him) to pass an executive order that anyone found narrating Uriah the Hittite's story would receive 160 lashes- 80 lashes for spreading lies and another 80 for insulting a prophet[1].

Now let us run a glance over the interpretations put forth by our exegetes *(mufassireen)*:

1. Generally, exegetes narrate the same story of Uriah that has been passed on from the Jews and they claim that the sin David had repented for was rape. However, the narration of the Qur'an does not support this argument. The Qur'an simply quotes the plaintiff as saying, فَقَالَ أَكْفِلْنِيهَا وَعَزَّنِي فِي الْخِطَابِ ﴿٢٣﴾ *"And he said: Give her (your lone ewe) into my charge, and he got the better of me in argument."* (Surah Saad:23) The plaintiff does not say that 'My companion forcibly took away my ewe' or 'planned to murder me and take it away'.
2. Some exegetes have averred that Uriah was only engaged to Bathsheba and David had erred by sending his own proposal over the proposal of his Muslim brother. However, the narration of the Qur'an does not support this. In the parable, it is clear that the ewe belonged to the plaintiff, and not that he had a desire to purchase it and his wealthy companion outbid him.
3. Certain exegetes have assumed that David's fault was that he was not saddened by the death of Bathsheba's husband because he was attracted to her. However, this is a baseless interpretation and renders the entire parable put forth by the plaintiff absolutely meaningless.
4. Some others feel that there is no lady in the picture at all. Actually, this was a plot to assassinate David and some people had scaled the wall to enter his chamber. However, when David got alerted, they came up with

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[1] Please refer Kashhaf, Tafseer Kabeer and Tafseer Baizawi

this case to make up a story as an excuse. But David got a hint of their true intention and sought to take revenge. Then he either felt guilty of stooping below his stature by even thinking of taking revenge or he felt guilty of accusing and suspecting them of foul play without any valid proof. He turned regretful on account of either of these two reasons and sought pardon.

However, this interpretation is faulted for a number of reasons:

a. This is not such a big event for the Qur'an to narrate it here with such grandeur.

b. The words of the Qur'an do not point towards any assassination plot or that David felt guilty of wanting to take revenge or suspecting them of foul play without any valid proof.

c. The Qur'anic narrative makes it clear that he realized he was put to trial by his Lord as soon as he pronounced his judgment. This shows that this parable and the judgment certainly had something to do with his trial and it was upon this that he offered his repentance.

d. If they were indeed enemies and had come to assassinate David, there was nothing wrong in wanting to take revenge, and this would render this admonishment ineffectual that: يَٰدَاوُۥدُ إِنَّا جَعَلۡنَٰكَ خَلِيفَةً *"O David, We have appointed you vicegerent on earth...."*(Surah Saad:26) And if they were innocent, their parable cannot be discarded as a trick to make up a story, but it should definitely have some substance to it. Also, the Qur'an should have at least hinted that this case was just an excuse that they had made up.

5. Certain exegetes have suggested that David sought forgiveness not for himself, but for those who had come to assassinate him. But in such a scenario, the mention of 'trial' becomes meaningless and the

admonishment, يٰدَاوٗدُ اِنَّا جَعَلۡنٰكَ خَلِيۡفَةً *"O David, We have appointed you vicegerent on earth...."* (Surah Saad:26) seems completely out of place.

6. Contemporary exegetes have said that David did not repent. Rather, when David apprehended that these men have come to assassinate him, he sought protection and refuge with Allah. These exegetes take the word '*istagfaar*' in its literal sense, viz. 'To pray that Allah shelters him in His protection and secures him'. However, this interpretation goes against Arabic syntax. Moreover, this is an extremely lame proposition that a person as brave as Prophet David would resort to bows and prostrations instead of facing the enemy. Also, if we follow this interpretation, the words: ظَنَّ دَاوٗدُ اَنَّمَا فَتَنّٰهُ *"David realized that it is We Who have put him to test"*, فَغَفَرۡنَا لَهٗ ذٰلِكَ *"Thereupon We forgave him"* and يٰدَاوٗدُ اِنَّا جَعَلۡنٰكَ خَلِيۡفَةً *"O David, We have appointed you vicegerent on earth...."* (Surah Saad:24,25,26) are rendered meaningless.

7. According to some exegetes, David was guilty of passing his judgment relying upon the statement of the plaintiff alone, while not letting in the defendant's statement. This is again a weak interpretation. We cannot conclusively claim that the defendant's statement was not recorded simply because the Qur'an does not make any mention of it. It is quite possible that he might have pleaded guilty to the charge, and hence his statement was not mentioned, as the Qur'an does not delve into unnecessary details. Moreover, in this case, the admonishment, وَلَا تَتَّبِعِ الۡهَوٰى فَيُضِلَّكَ عَنۡ سَبِيۡلِ اللّٰهِ *"Do not follow your desire, lest it should lead you astray from Allah's path"* (Surah Saad:26) seems out of place because David had no vested interest in entertaining only one litigant's statement. At the most, this can be regarded as an innocent negligence in

following judicial principle and procedure, which should have been taken up in a different manner.

8. Some exegetes have come up with an altogether different interpretation. They say that Prophet David had divided his schedule into four slots. One day was devoted only to worship, one day to pass court judgments, one day to look into his household affairs and one day to admonish his subjects by means of sermons. Now, because this division of schedule had been adopted by David without any divine sanction (which is not expected of a prophet) and that a prophet should allot more time to sermons and sorting out people's problems, God reprimanded him for doing so. However, this interpretation is weak for the following reasons:

i. The Hadith related to this division of schedule is a *shaaz* narration (i.e. a Hadith narration that is countered by other stronger Hadith narrations) that certain exegetes have narrated on the authority of Abdullah ibn Abbas (Allah be pleased with him). Much stronger Hadith narrations related by Masrooq and Saeed bin Jubair on the very authority of Abdullah ibn Abbas support the interpretation that we have adopted, viz. 'David had not done anything more than that he requested him to divorce her'. The Qur'anic statement in the 24th ayat of Surah Saad, *"He has certainly wronged you in seeking to add your ewe to his ewes"* also lends credence to this narration.

ii. If a person has not come across this narration by Abdullah ibn Abbas, he would never understand the meaning of this Qur'anic passage and would instead adopt a diametrically opposite meaning relying upon the words used in the Qur'an. It does not behove even an ordinary book- let alone the revealed book of God- that its words are so inept in conveying the author's message that the reader

would take home an entirely opposite meaning if he does not refer to an external narration to clearly understand what the book wishes to convey. A Hadith narration that explores and provides insights into the apparent meaning of the original text is undoubtedly beneficial. However, if it deviates from the apparent meaning and diverts the topic somewhere else, then such a narration would not be termed interpretive, but decisive, and it necessarily would then entail that the Qur'an would be utterly lacking in the absence of this *decisive* narration.

iii. It should also be noted that Abdullah ibn Abbas has not narrated this Hadith to justify the reprimand. Rather, he has narrated this Hadith to explain why the litigants had to scale the wall to reach his chamber. He explains that David was slated to be engrossed in worship that particular day in his private chamber. There is no hint in the Hadith to suggest that God rebuked David for having committed a day exclusively for worship.

iv. If what this interpretation suggests is indeed true, there was no need to go into the details of the litigants' case. It is against the nature of the Qur'an to elaborate on those details that do not serve the purpose of the narration. It would instead have been sufficient to state that 'people were being unjust to each other and We sent two such litigants to convey this to David'.

v. Increasing or decreasing one's hours of worship cannot be regarded as *hawa* (desire). The Qur'an has never labelled this act as an outcome of one's personal desires, nor do we find a single instance where an increase in hours of worship has invited divine rebuke. It is beyond imagination that God would castigate His devout worshipper in the

> words, *"Do not follow (your) desire lest it should lead you astray from Allah's path."*

It is for these reasons that we cannot accept this interpretation.

After exhausting all these potential prospects, the only interpretation left with us is the one we have adopted and towards which certain early exegetes have also shown inclination. In short, the matter was definitely related to Uriah's wife but not beyond the fact that influenced by the familiar traditions of his society, David had requested Uriah to divorce his wife. This is all the more true because had the story of Uriah's wife been completely false, the Qur'an would have rejected it in very clear terms, just as the false charges of polytheism, disbelief and sorcery levelled against Solomon have been rejected outright[1]. This was important for the reason that the perverted story of Uriah's wife was accepted as an established fact among the Jews, and it is beyond possibility that the Qur'an mentions a prophet but does not absolve him of the false charges hurled against him[2]. The only thing that has kept people from accepting this interpretation is the assumption that such an act is contrary to the infallible nature of prophets. However, these gentlemen might not have considered the fact that the prophets are not innately infallible; rather, it is God who has deliberately protected them from falling into sin and giving into their temptations, so that they might discharge their responsibilities of prophethood in the expected manner. If they were to get deprived of God's special protection for even a moment, they would be as much vulnerable to sin and make a mistake as other human beings are, and this is a subtle point that God has indeed taken away this protection from all prophets at some point

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[1] Kindly refer Surah Baqarah ruku 12

[2] Especially when the Bible has an incident similar to the one narrated in the Qur'an, causing doubts and misgivings about that prophet among the masses

of their lives and allowed them to fall into an error or two in order to demonstrate to the world that they are after all human beings, not gods.

There are two more misunderstandings related to this incident that need to be clarified:

a. Prophet David had 99 wives: This misunderstanding owes its origin to the mention of 99 ewes in the parable narrated by the plaintiff. However, the number 99 only serves to denote a large number and not the actual number per se. What the plaintiff wanted to say was that 'you already have many women and you are quite capable of marrying many others'.

b. The litigants were not humans, but angels: This has been assumed because they scaled the wall to reach the chamber. This argument seems quite weak not because it is implausible for angels to assume human form, but because neither were the angels seemingly required to come down, nor is scaling a wall beyond human ability, necessitating angels to do so. Moreover, there does not seem to be any particular need for us to assume that they were angels when God has not said any such thing. Some people have argued that they were indeed angels, citing the fear David felt in their regard. This is also a weak argument. It is absolutely natural for a man sitting in his private chamber to get startled and get apprehensive when he sees unexpected people scale the wall and enter his room. What exactly makes this event so astonishing that someone should presume them to be angels?

All said and done, These are my own derivations; true knowledge belongs to God alone.

Tarjuman ul Qu'an

(Rajab 1357 AH/ December 1938 CE)

Prophet Solomon (Peace be upon him) and the Queen of Saba

The second and third *ruku* (sections) of Surah anNaml mention Prophet Solomon and the Queen of Saba. What they say is that when the hoopoe informed Prophet Solomon about the polytheism and sun-worship of the nation of Saba, he invited their Queen to accept Islam[1].

The Queen consulted her courtiers in this matter. They said that they possess great military might and would not surrender without a fight. However, the Queen did not agree to a war citing its devastating consequences and suggested a diplomatic course instead. Accordingly, it was unanimously decided that a precious gift be sent to King Solomon. Solomon replied that he was not in need of their gift and what he instead sought was their acceptance of Islam or their subjugation to his rule. Thus, a war was declared. Upon this declaration, Solomon turned towards his officers and asked who among them could get the Queen's throne to him. One of the jinn claimed that he could get it before Solomon rose from his place, while the one who had 'knowledge of the book' claimed to get it in the twinkling of an eye, and he was indeed successful in doing so. Here, Shah Abdul Quadir Dehlvi (Allah have mercy on his soul) writes in Mozah alQur'an:

> *"The possessions of a disbeliever who is out of faith are annexable. They cannot be annexed once he/she accepts Islam."*

When Solomon saw the throne placed firmly beside him, he exclaimed, "This is by the grace of my Lord, so

[1] The kingdom of Saba was located in the Arab lands of Yemen, while Prophet Solomon ruled over the lands of Palestine and Syria.

that He may test me whether I accept His bounty like one of His grateful servants or act with ingratitude like the disbelievers". Here, Shah Abdul Qadir Dehlvi has again written in the footnote:

> *"It means that (the throne) has not come to me by employing natural means. Instead, it is the grace of God that my companions have reached a stature that they have attained miraculous powers... And he possessed certain knowledge of the book, i.e. knowledge of God's names and the efficacy of His words. His name was Asif, his minister."*

A gentleman has raised the following doubts in reference to these ayaat and the interpretation offered by Shah Abdul Qadir Dehlvi (Allah have mercy on his soul) and has asked me to offer a clarification of the same:

1. It does not seem to behove a prophet of such high stature to annex the property of other people by employing supernatural powers. While I do accept that it is permissible to lay hands on the property of a combatant disbeliever, is it not beyond the call of a prophet's piety to have the precious possessions of others annexed by resorting to such supernatural means instead of honourably acquiring them in the battlefield as spoils of war?
2. The acquisition of the Queen's throne has been attributed to the powers of one of Solomon's officers and is not a miracle of Solomon himself. Could a prophet capable of taming satans and jinn not get the throne himself by his special powers?
3. The Bible, which is replete with the detailed stories of Israeli prophets, does not have any such mention of Solomon annexing the throne.

We now present a brief discussion on these doubts....

First and foremost, let us understand that Islam neither favours self-governance, nor imperialism. Its form of government is quite different from those practiced in the

world. It is based on sound intelligible principles instead of mere emotions and desires. The basis of this ideology is that it is only the righteous who are entitled to rule the world, and righteous is he who is obedient to God and follows His guidance, who employs the powers bestowed upon him by God to uphold His law and who strives to serve the moral, spiritual and material interests of all human beings rather than concentrating only on himself or on the development of his community alone. Such a person is not the sole asset of a single community but that of the entire mankind. It is his right and duty to establish the law of God in the entire world and to deliver mankind from the clutches of ignorant and unjust rulers and their tyrannical systems. On the other hand, those people who are deprived of divine guidance and divine law, and who do not possess such a pure heart that allows them to selflessly serve all mankind in all humility are in no way eligible to hold the reins of governance. They would be counted as tyrants, whether they rule over their own community or a foreign territory. A righteous person has all the right to seize powers from such people.

The Islamic principle in this regard is to first invite them to accept the True Path (Islam). If they accept it and start obeying divine law, they would naturally be considered righteous and would then be eligible to hold government posts based upon their merits and qualifications. But if they decline to do so, they would no longer be entitled to rule over their subjects. They would be overthrown by force and their rule abolished, relegating them to the ranks of common law-abiding citizens in an Islamic political setup so that they are prevented from spreading mischief and corruption on God's land. As for their disbelief and polytheism, they would be punished by God on the Day of Judgment. In this world, they would continue to have the liberty to follow the religion and ideology of their choice.

Once we have understood this principle, let us consider the course of action adopted by Solomon (Peace be upon him). He is the prophet of God. God has provided him with the True knowledge, as stated in the 15th ayat of Surah anNaml: وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا دَاوٗدَ وَسُلَيْمٰنَ عِلْمًا *"We granted knowledge to David and Solomon"*. He has been granted virtues and morals superior not only to disbelievers, but to all other common believers as well: الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِيْ فَضَّلَنَا عَلٰى كَثِيْرٍ مِّنْ عِبَادِهِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ *"All Praise be to Allah Who has exalted us above many of His believing servants."* (anNaml : 15) His devotion and obedience towards His Lord is complete and flawless: نِعْمَ الْعَبْدُ اِنَّهٗ اَوَّابٌ *"How excellent a servant (of Ours he was)! Indeed he constantly turned to us in devotion."* (Saad:30) It is through the words of his father, David, that God has proclaimed that the only rightful inheritors of the earth and the ones who truly deserve to be His vicegerents in this world are His righteous servants. وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِي الزَّبُوْرِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ اَنَّ الْاَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصّٰلِحُوْنَ *"Surely We wrote in the Psalms, after the exhortation, that the earth shall be inherited by my righteous servants."* (alAnbiya: 105) It is on this basis that he was ruling over the Islamic states of Palestine and Syria.

While serving in this capacity, he receives information that there's a community that worships the sun, is influenced by Satan, and has thus been led astray. يَسْجُدُوْنَ لِلشَّمْسِ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ اَعْمَالَهُمْ فَصَدَّهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيْلِ فَهُمْ لَا يَهْتَدُوْنَ *"I found that she and her people prostrate themselves before the sun rather than Allah. Satan has made their deeds appear attractive to them and has thus debarred them from the Right Path so they do not find true guidance."* (Surah anNaml ayat 24). As per Islamic practice, he sends an invitation to their nobility to either accept Islam or live as subjects under a righteous government, because you are not entitled to continue as rulers over a piece of land that belongs to God, while you are obeying and

following the Satanic cult. اَلَّا تَعْلُوْا عَلَيَّ وَاْتُوْنِيْ مُسْلِمِيْنَ *"Do not act towards me with defiance, but come to me in submission"*. (Surah anNaml ayat 31) The Queen inclines towards the true faith upon reading his letter. وَاُوْتِيْنَا الْعِلْمَ مِنْ قَبْلِهَا وَ كُنَّا مُسْلِمِيْنَ *"We had already come to know this and we had submitted ourselves."* (Surah anNaml ayat 42). However, community prejudices and the attachment to ancestral religion kept her from accepting Islam. وَصَدَّهَا مَا كَانَتْ تَّعْبُدُ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ ۭ اِنَّهَا كَانَتْ مِنْ قَوْمٍ كٰفِرِيْنَ *"What prevented her (from accepting the True Faith) was her worshipping deities other than Allah, for she belonged to an unbelieving people."* (Surah anNaml ayat 43) She consults her courtiers. They show readiness to go to war. The Queen stops them and instead sends gifts to Solomon to try and placate him. Solomon, however, rejects her offer. This is because he is not like other worldly kings whose sole interest lies in accumulating wealth. Rather, he has been appointed by God to make people subservient to His rule, or in the very least overthrow those governments that are engrossed in sin and transgression and establish an Islamic government in their stead. On this account, he rejects the Queen's gifts and challenges her to a war.

قَالَ اَتُمِدُّوْنَنِ بِمَالٍ فَمَآ اٰتٰـنِۦَ اللّٰهُ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّآ اٰتٰـكُمْ ۚ بَلْ اَنْتُمْ بِهَدِيَّتِكُمْ تَفْرَحُوْنَ ۝٣٦
اِرْجِعْ اِلَيْهِمْ فَلَنَاْتِيَنَّهُمْ بِجُنُوْدٍ لَّا قِبَلَ لَهُمْ بِهَا وَلَنُخْرِجَنَّهُمْ مِّنْهَآ اَذِلَّةً
وَّهُمْ صٰغِرُوْنَ ۝٣٧

"Solomon said: Do you want to aid me with wealth? Whatever Allah has granted me is much more than what He has given you. (Keep for yourselves) your gift in which you are exulting. Envoy, go back to those who sent you and we shall certainly come upon them with hosts whom they will be unable to resist. We shall drive them out from there, and they will suffer humiliation and disgrace."

(Surah anNaml ayaat 36 and 37)

Overawed by Solomon's stand, the Queen agrees to obey Solomon and presents herself before him in Jerusalem.

On this occasion, Solomon commands his officers to get her throne before her arrival. This was certainly not because Solomon was desirous of her beautiful throne and he wanted to have it for himself. Rather, his intention was to make her witness the amazing powers bestowed by God so that she does not remain a mere *dhimmi* (disbelieving subject in an Islamic government), but wholeheartedly accepts Islam and spends her life as a Muslim lady. Accordingly, when she came to meet him, her throne was brought to Solomon and presented before her in a casual manner. قَالَ نَكِّرُوْا لَهَا عَرْشَهَا نَنْظُرْ اَتَهْتَدِيْٓ اَمْ تَكُوْنُ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَهْتَدُوْنَ *"Solomon said: Set the throne before her casually and let us see whether she gets to the Truth or is one of those who are not guided to what is right."*(anNaml : 41) The Queen recognized her throne. This was enough to open her eyes, and the faith that had simply touched her when she read Solomon's first letter had now penetrated her heart with all its radiance. قَالَتْ كَاَنَّهٗ هُوَ ۚ وَاُوْتِيْنَا الْعِلْمَ مِنْ قَبْلِهَا وَكُنَّا مُسْلِمِيْنَ *"We had already come to know this and we had submitted ourselves."* (Surah anNaml ayat 42).

This explanation rules out the doubt that an exalted prophet annexed the property of someone by resorting to supernatural means. In fact, what actually happened cannot be termed as annexation or transgression. Rather, the Queen and the nobility of a pagan community were made to witness the miracles of God-gifted powers; not just to entertain them, but with the intention that they may renounce paganism and accept Islam. The sincere intentions and God-consciousness of Solomon (Peace be upon him) that the Qur'an testifies to leaves no room for any of the misgivings that the enquirer has put forth. The Queen of Saba offers him valuables but Solomon rejects them saying that what his Lord has given him is much

better than her gifts. When the Queen's throne is brought before him, he does not exult in pride and arrogance. Instead, he gratefully acknowledges God's grace and favours upon him, and he falls down in prostration. Then, when the Queen of Saba enters his court in all submission, she is not asked to part with any of her territory. She is not asked to grant them trade concessions or any special economic status. There is no proposal to impose a mandate or protectorate status on her nation. There is no talk of establishing a Residency or High Commission in her land. Instead, there's only one thing that is presented to her- the Word of Truth (Islam), in support of which a sign of divine powers (her own throne) is shown to her that she may accept guidance. Upon witnessing this miracle, the Queen cries out: رَبِّ إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي وَأَسْلَمْتُ مَعَ سُلَيْمَٰنَ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَٰلَمِينَ *"My Lord, I have been inflicting much wrong on myself. Now I submit myself with Solomon to Allah, the Lord of the whole universe."* (anNaml : 44) and the ruler of the Islamic state feels satisfied that he has met his purpose.

Now let us take up the second question as to why the miracle of procuring the Queen's throne was delegated to another person. It is but obvious that all this took place by the will and power of God, and He could have chosen his prophet to accomplish this task. But since He chose another person to do this job, there must have surely been some reason behind it. What could that reason be? We cannot say anything definite in this regard. What I have gathered is that perhaps the purpose was to exhibit the difference between the Jinn's fiery powers and human beings' power of knowledge.[1] Despite the fact that man, being restricted by his body and limited powers, cannot accomplish a supernatural task, and that in this regard the Jinn's fiery nature is far more superior to man's clay body, man

[1] Keep in mind that a mighty Jinn from Solomon's court had said that he could get the throne before Solomon dismisses the court. But the person who possessed knowledge of the book could do so within the twinkling of an eye.

becomes more powerful than all other powerful objects of creation by employing the power of his knowledge. Had this power of man's knowledge been exhibited through a prophet, a window of doubt could have been left open, given the fact that a prophet is anyway superior to all human beings and Jinn. Hence, Solomon getting the throne would not have decisively demonstrated the superior power of man's knowledge. This is probably why God demonstrated the power of human knowledge by the agency of an ordinary human being who was not a prophet so that the truth is laid bare, with no possibility of any doubt whatsoever.

As for the query that 'Why is this incident not mentioned in the Bible or the Talmud?' its answer can be found in the comparative study of the Qur'an and these books. The Bible and the Talmud contain all sorts of folklore; important points being overlooked in favour of useless tales. A study of scores of pages would hardly throw up a point or two worth noting down. While you would certainly find many unnecessary details of the story being narrated, you would rarely come across a line that contains some wisdom, some teaching, some religious, moral, juristic or political lesson that we could benefit from. On the contrary, the Qur'an omits out all unnecessary details and extracts before us the nectar from the prophets' lives and only those things are presented that contain an ocean of guidance for all people, for all times to come. Unlike the Qur'an, you would find an abundance of worthless historical records in those books. On the other hand, the Qur'an is filled with many enlightening stories, while these books are utterly lacking in this regard.

And it doesn't end here; it's far more terrible than this. The accounts of most of the prophets have been narrated in the Bible in such a manner that it becomes difficult for a person to even accept them as ordinary men of upright character, let alone as prophets of God. This credit goes to the Qur'an alone that it has cleansed the accounts of past

prophets from all the filthy accusations that the Jews have levelled against them and re-established their high status before the world in a manner that does justice to their exalted personalities. Look up the Biblical accounts of Noah, Abraham, Lot, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Aaron, David and Solomon (Peace be upon them all); you would come across many a stain on their characters. Now go through the Qur'an; they would appear to you as a galaxy of shining stars. Prophethood is a far-off status; in Judaism, Solomon has even been stripped of his status as a believer. The Bible says that towards the fag end of his life, he had turned so materialistic that he began to worship idols. On the contrary, the Qur'an says that he was a staunch believer and a great prophet of God till his last breath.

The moral and spiritual deprivation of the Bani Israel (Children of Israel) had stooped to alarming levels, allowing them to not only tarnish the images of their own prophets in their religious texts by fabricating false stories in their regard, but to also reject the vindication provided by the Qur'an when it projected the true image of their high moral character and virtues. They just couldn't come to terms with the fact that human character could be so chaste, man's morals could be so high, people created from clay and water could have such pure hearts, lofty determinations and the urge to sacrifice themselves before God. This was inconceivable to their petty minds. That is why their corruption of thought resurged after the revelation of the Qur'an. Each and every prophetic story from the Qur'an was targeted and distorted. The Qur'an always focuses on the important aspects of a story, passing over its unnecessary details. The resultant voids in the story can be filled by the reader by his own imagination or with the help of any external information that is assessable to him. However, people having Jewish leanings preferred filling this void with stories so disgusting and abominable that they completely did away with the moral benefits that could be attained by those stories. Unfortunately, these

Jewish fabricated stories found their way into many an exegesis of the Qur'an, leading many students of the Qur'an into doubts and misunderstandings.

Take for instance this story of Solomon and the Queen of Saba. How beautiful is the sketch of Prophet Solomon that we see in the simple and clear narration of this passage of the Qur'an! However, Jewish inclinations wiped off each and every important aspect of this story, downgrading it from its high status to such an inferior position that there remained no moral lesson to be learnt from it, to the point that those students of the Qur'an who take the aid of these fabrications are left wondering why these stories have been narrated in the Qur'an at all.

We have already mentioned why Prophet Solomon refused to accept the gifts sent by the Queen of Saba. Following is an account of the Jewish version of the same episode:

The Queen had sent two hundred slaves and two hundred slave-girls in such clothes that the male slaves could not be differentiated from the slave-girls. Her intention was to test Solomon's intelligence. When this delegation reached Solomon, he separated the male slaves from the slave-girls and instructed that they be sent back, that he was in no need of such a gift. After this interpretation, run a glace over Solomon's reply yet again. Are you still able to appreciate any charm, any high moral spirit in his reply?

You have also read why the throne was brought to Solomon's court. Now consider the interpretation of this narration that has been done under Jewish influence. The hoopoe had generously praised the royal throne of Saba when it met Solomon. The entire throne was made up of gold and decked up with precious jewels; an amazing specimen of creation. Solomon became desirous of this throne. When he received the news that the Queen and her nobility were being brought to him, he thought that if these people accept Islam or accept subjugation, he would not be

able to lay his hands over their throne. Hence, out of this apprehension, he ordered that the throne be brought to him. God forbid! How far removed is this lust and greed from the pure intentions we have discussed earlier! From such an exalted position, this affair has been thrown to such depths!

The actual purpose of presenting the throne before the Queen was to show her that the precious treasure that you had carefully locked up and secured before coming here is right here in front of you; this is just a minor spectacle of the power of divinely granted knowledge. The only reason why this material evidence was presented in addition to the logical argument was that this lady might somehow receive guidance. Prophet Solomon has himself attested to this by saying, "Let us see whether she gets to the Truth or is one of those who are not guided to what is right" [Surah anNaml ayat 41]. But even such a straight and clear episode proved to be beyond the grasp of those who are inclined to spinning tales. They interpreted this episode by saying that the throne was presented before her because Prophet Solomon wanted to test her intelligence. It was for this reason that he had the throne placed before her in a disguised form, to see whether she could recognize it or not. This is what happens when the actions of a Prophet are views from the eyes of the foolish- they seem to be bereft of the exalted objectives and immaculate prudence that they reflect.

The most derogatory remark in this regard relates to the presence of the Queen of Saba in Solomon's palace. The Qur'an says that after presenting her throne to the Queen, Solomon showed her around his glass-paved palace, the flooring of which was also of glass or crystal. When the Queen stepped in, she mistook the glass floor for water and raised her skirt. Solomon told her that it was rather a glass flooring. Now, it clearly dawned upon the Queen. Her heart bore witness that a person who ruled over such vast territories, had such wealth, such luxuries and amenities, such extraordinary powers that he can get my throne from a distance of thousands of miles within the

twinkling of an eye and was yet so morally upright, so chaste, so sincere and pious certainly ought to be a man of truth, and there was no reason whatsoever to reject his claim to prophethood. Hence, she cries out: رَبِّ اِنِّیْ ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِیْ وَاَسْلَمْتُ مَعَ سُلَیْمٰنَ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِیْنَ *"My Lord, I have been inflicting much wrong on myself. Now I submit myself with Solomon to Allah, the Lord of the whole universe."* (Surah anNaml ayat 44).

This is what can be inferred from the plain statement of the Qur'an. Now let us have a look at those exegeses that have been written under Jewish influence...

The satans and jinn who were under the authority of Solomon feared that he might fall in love with the Queen of Saba. So they told Solomon that she was born to a Jinni lady and that her feet are not the same as human feet, rather they are like a donkey's hooves. In order to ascertain this claim, Solomon had a glass palace constructed. The flooring of this palace was also made of glass and water was filled beneath it. The intended purpose of this setup was that the Queen might see the water and uncover her feet when she enters the palace. Thus, Solomon would gain an opportunity to check her feet. God forbid! Is this the story of a prophet or that of a licentious monarch?

These are just a few examples to showcase how Jewish influences and inclinations did not stop at corrupting the Biblical teachings, but went ahead and have left no stone unturned in corrupting the message of the Qur'an and tarnishing the image of prophets mentioned in the Qur'an as well. However, God has preserved the Qur'an in its original text, allowing every person to refer to the original Qur'an and cast out the scum from the truth. Now if a man were to overlook the Qur'an and demonstrate a Jewish bend of mind by considering their fabricated tales as the basis for interpreting the Qur'an, then such a person has only himself to blame.

Tarjuman ul Qur'an
Rabiul akhir 1355 AH/ July 1936 CE

Jinn- Facts and Myths

This article was written as a critique of a book that was published some years back. Initially, we had presented a brief assessment of the author's views on jinns. Then, a writer expressed his counter-views on our criticism. This article has been written in its reply. Since this is intended to be an intellectual debate, not a tool to revive any old discussion, we have decided against publishing the names of both the concerned writers.

Doubts related to the authenticity of 'Jinns' have probably cropped up in recent times towards the end of mid 19th century. In that age, believing something that had not been proved by scientific study, merely on the basis of some religious text was considered quite embarrassing, and such an embarrassing stand could only be taken up by a person who was ready to be labelled as an ignorant and superstitious lunatic by the educated class of that society. In this backdrop, those Muslims who were only interested in pursuing their material interests and deemed it necessary to be recognized as progressive and rationalists by their non-Muslim masters began to study the Qur'an from a completely new angle. They started re-interpreting all those issues that were unacceptable to the materialistic and myopic 19th century intelligentsia in such a fantastic manner that the issue at hand did not seem to escape the Qur'an and at the same time got moulded as per the views and thought processes of those gentlemen who were at odds with the basic principles and spirit of the Qur'an itself. Of the many Qur'anic narrations that have been distorted to serve this end, we also have the narrations related to *iblees*

(the chief Satan), satans and jinns. It has been said that these terms do not connote any form of creation that is not human or that has some supernatural existence per se; rather, they either imply the evil side of men that are referred to as 'satan', or they refer elsewhere to the barbaric, savage, mountainous vigour of men and at other places these terms are used to denote those people who used to hide themselves while listening to the Qur'an. These interpretations are so lame that they can be adopted only by those people who either have no knowledge of the Arabic language or the Qur'an whatsoever, or those who fear men more than they fear God and the Day of Judgment. However, after the uprising of 1857, both these qualities could be found in Muslims at one and the same time, paving the way for such- and exceedingly more vague- interpretations of the Qur'an that have allegedly been done in the name of intellectual pursuit in the support of Islam.

But like all other phases in human history, this phase also waned off. Today, we have a sizable section of European society that believes in spirituality and in the existence of a world that is beyond the physical realm and beyond the reach of our senses. Hence, acknowledging the existence of jinns and satans is no longer as dangerous as it was some years back. Nonetheless, the effects of that era have not yet faded completely and people's minds are still not ready to accept something merely on the authority of the Qur'an, especially if it deals with those things that are both supernatural and seemingly impractical. We could witness some glimpses of that era in the aforementioned book. The author has, going by the clear wordings of the Qur'an, been compelled to accept that Jinns are a form of creation that have been created from fire, and have an existence that is independent of human beings. However, since the actions attributed to jinns at various places in the Qur'an are way beyond the ordinary, and to believe in them in the literal sense at face value does not seem to appeal to

human intellect, the author has come up with an interpretation that allows him to classify jinns into two categories- one is that special entity that has been created from fire and is different from human beings and the other is a special category of human beings regarding whom he has no idea who they are, nor does he have any reference to demarcate them from other humans or how and why they have been referred to as 'jinn'.

By the grace of God, our friend has not been affected by these views. However, at one place he does suspect that 'jinns' are indeed men. Although he does not concur with the author's views that 'wherever the Qur'an speaks of jinn and men together, it does not refer to the fiery jinn, but to a class of human beings', he does seem to inline towards the idea that the jinns mentioned in the story of Prophet Solomon were human beings, not fiery entities, because 'they were visible, and used to dive and make utensils like human beings'.

(Please note that the original Urdu text says woh nazar na aate the, but that is an error. It should have been woh nazar aate the, going by the context and its discussion later in this chapter under 'The Second Argument in favour of 'Jinn' referring to Humans'... Tr)

Two rules

Before we delve deeper into this issue, please understand two rules:

First: When God intends to acquaint us with something which is beyond our knowledge and comprehension He naturally denotes it with a word that we use in our language to refer to something that is closely related to that particular thing. This He does, so that we might be able to make a fairly close estimation of the thing that is in His knowledge, but not in ours. It can never be that God would for no reason use a specific word to name a

particular thing, if there was no need to prefer this particular word over other words to connote that thing. If that had been the case, then the word 'jannat'(garden) would not have been preferred over the word 'jahannum' (hell) to refer to the thing that has been called 'jannat', and it would have been equally permissible if the entity that has been referred to by using the word *noor* (light) would have been called *naar* (fire).

Second: When God uses a word from the human lexicon in His book whose one particular meaning is widely recognized in dictionaries and the spoken language, then as a rule, that word would be understood to connote the same recognized meaning in the Book of God that is universally accepted in that language's literature. The only exception to this rule is when there is an obvious sign that suggests that God has used this word, at a particular place or throughout the Book, in the form of a terminology that deviates from its recognized meaning. In the absence of any such obvious sign, it is not in the least appropriate for a person to assume a particular meaning of a word from the Qur'an in total disregard to the accepted recognized meaning of that word as it appears in the dictionary and the spoken language. If this is allowed, then the matter passes beyond mere interpretation and exegesis and ends up in corruption and distortion, paving the way for an unbridled cascade of vague exegeses.

The literal meaning of the word 'Jinn'

According to the first rule, we should find out what the word Jinn means in the Arabic language and what the Arab literary experts understand by this word.

The word Jinn جن has its roots in ج ن ن (j,n,n). The central theme idea of this root is 'concealment' and all its derivations have this theme in common. "The actual meaning of 'jinn' is something that is hidden from the senses" (Raghib). "Everything that is hidden from you is

concealed from your eyes" (Jamharah ibn Duraid wa Lisan alArab). In the same context, cavities of objects, being invisible, are called Jinaan. The spirit is called Jinaan because the body has it concealed within it. The heart is called Jinaan because it is concealed within the thoracic cage. The ladies' residential quarter is called Jinaan because it is hidden within the four walls. A garden is called Jannat because thick foliage covers its land. If a garden does not exhibit this feature, then it cannot be called Jannat. A foetus, within the mother's womb, is called Jineen. The womb is also called Janeen. When the dead body has been buried, it becomes Janeen. In fact, every such thing that is hidden can be called Janeen. A hidden rancour is called 'Haqde Janeen'. The grave and the shroud are also called Janan. The process of burial has been called Ijnaan. Accordingly, we find this usage in a Hadith. A veil or partition is called Junnah. The 2nd ayat of Surah Munafiqoon (اِتَّخَذُوٓا اَيۡمَانَهُمۡ جُنَّةً *"They shelter behind their oaths/ they have taken their oaths as a cover"*) makes mention of this word in the sense that 'they have used their oaths to cover the hypocrisy that they harbour within their hearts'. Elsewhere in the Qur'an Janna has been used in the clause, فَلَمَّا جَنَّ عَلَيۡهِ الَّيۡلُ *"When the darkness of the night covered it"*. (Surah al Anām : 76) Ijnaan means to conceal and Istajnaan means to hide. Jannu, Janaanu and Junoonu have been used in the sentence which means: 'The extreme darkness of the night that conceals secrets.'

Secrecy and concealment are also called Jinn. *La junnu bi hazal amr* would mean 'There is no secret involved in this matter'. *Jannu anNaas* and *Ijnan unNaas* refer to a crowd of men in which a man entering inside would get lost from sight.

We thus gather that whatever entity is denoted by the word 'Jinn' in the Arabic language would definitely be something that is imperceptible, or in the very least, hidden or concealed. Such an entity that does not have the feature

or quality of being hidden would never be called Jinn. All great linguistic scholars have been unanimous in stating this reason behind the use of the word Jinn. Look up Jamharah ibn Duaraid, Mufradat Imam Raghib, Sihah, Qamoos, Lisan alArab, Taj alUroos or any other standard Arabic lexicon- you would find it mentioned therein that Jinns are called by this name because they are hidden from our vision, or in other words, invisible.

Testimony from Arab literature

After discussing references from the Arabic lexicon, let us now ponder over the Arabic literature, through which we come to know that the Qur'an has not been the first to use this terminology. The Arabs have always been referring to a supernatural entity as 'Jinn' that was essentially invisible and imperceptible, but could occasionally be seen in different forms, which they believed had extraordinary abilities and was able to influence minds and bodies in various ways. They also believed that these entities used to occupy and control certain specific territories, such territories being called *Ardhe Majnah*. They believed that uninhabited forests and deserts were controlled by some or the other jinn. Accordingly, when they used to camp in the wilderness at night, they used to supplicate thus: 'We seek refuge with this valley's master among the jinns that he may allow us to spend the night here in peace and security'. They believed that empty houses are infiltrated by jinns. It would be said about any person who would spend the night in some deserted house that 'he had been the jinn's guest that night'. Akhtal says, "And we spent a night as guests of a jinn".

The ignorant Arabs used to offer sacrifice in the name of jinns upon the construction of a new house, so that they might not harm the residents of the house. There is a Hadith that points towards this: 'Prophet Muhammad ﷺ forbade the offering of sacrifices for jinns'.

When a person used to turn insane, the Arabs used to assume that he has been possessed by a jinn. Hence, they used to call him *majnoon*. This assumption of theirs has been mentioned in the Qur'an in the 8th ayat of Surah Saba, أَفْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا أَمْ بِهِ جِنَّةٌ *"Has he (Muhammad ﷺ) forged a lie, or is he inflicted with madness?"* Here, the Arabic words bihi jinnatun have been used, which mean: 'a jinn comes upon him'.

If a cow refused to drink water, the bulls used to be slaughtered, under the assumption that they prevented the cow from drinking milk under the influence of jinns.

They also felt that there is a jinn accompanying every human being. They used to call it *taabae* (companion). Every extraordinary event used to be attributed to the jinns. If a man was exceptionally quick in his work, it was said that jinns enter into him; hence he was called jinni (in the sense that he was associated with jinns, and not that he was a jinn himself). Every poet had an exclusive jinn who used to put the poetry in his mouth. When a person used to lose his strength, it was said that the jinn who was the force behind his strength has departed from him. Exceptionally beautiful ladies were casually called jiniah, alluding to fairies, because they considered the beauty of jinn ladies to be beyond that of humans.

On the basis of these superhuman qualities and powers, the Arabs used to associate jinns with divinity. The Qur'an says, وَجَعَلُوا بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ الْجِنَّةِ نَسَبًا *"They have established kinship between Allah and the jinn"* (Surah asSaffat ayat 158) and it is on this basis that they used to make them God's partners in worship: بَلْ كَانُوا يَعْبُدُونَ الْجِنَّ أَكْثَرُهُمْ بِهِمْ مُؤْمِنُونَ *"Rather, they worshiped the Jinns and most of them believed in them"* (Surah Saba ayat 41). وَجَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ شُرَكَاءَ الْجِنَّ وَخَلَقَهُمْ وَخَرَقُوا لَهُ بَنِينَ وَبَنَاتٍ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ *"And yet, some people have come to associate the jinn with Allah in His divinity, even though it is He Who created*

them, and in ignorance they impute to Him sons and daughters" (Suah alAn'am ayat 100).

Moreover, they used to seek refuge with these jinns during trials and tribulations. كَانَ رِجَالٌ مِّنَ الْإِنْسِ يَعُوذُونَ بِرِجَالٍ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ *"Some from among the humans used to seek protection of some among the jinn"*[1] (Surah alJinn ayat 6)

They used to refer to angels as jinn as well. We have a couplet by A'ashi which goes…

He subjugated nine angelic jinns to his command

Who stand before him and serve him for free

The ignorant Arabs thought that angels were God's daughters. This has been alluded to many times in the Qur'an. For instance, وَجَعَلُوا الْمَلَٰئِكَةَ الَّذِينَ هُمْ عِبَٰدُ الرَّحْمَٰنِ إِنَٰثًا *"They claim that angels, who are Allah's chosen servants, are females."* (Surah alZukhruf ayat 19). أَفَأَصْفَٰكُمْ رَبُّكُم بِالْبَنِينَ وَاتَّخَذَ مِنَ الْمَلَٰئِكَةِ إِنَٰثًا *"What, has your Lord favoured you with sons and has taken for Himself daughters from among the angels?"* (Surah Bani Israil ayat 40)

In contrast, there is not a single piece of Arabic literature that testifies to the contrary, that the Arabs have ever used the word jinn to actually denote men. All sources testify to the fact that the Arabs considered jinn and men to be two mutually exclusive forms of creation. The works of Badr bin Aamir and Imran bin Hatan alHaroori can be cited in this regard.

The unanimous testimonial of Arab literary scholars is as follows:

Johri writes in his book alSaheeh: "Unlike humans, jinn are called so because they are hidden, invisible."

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[1] Please note that the words humans and jinns have been used together in this ayat, and it is obvious that these 'jinn' do not belong to the human species. Hence, this ayat disproves the contentious author's claim that: Wherever the words jinn and human have appeared together in the Qur'an, the word jinn connotes a class of men and not a fiery entity.

Ibn Seedah writes: "Jinn is a type of creation, being named so because they are hidden from our vision, invisible."

Ibn Duraid writes, "Jinn is the opposite of humans."

Certain Arguments

From what has been discussed above, we clearly understand as few points:

1. The meaning of 'Jinn' in the Arabic lexicon is the same as 'hidden' and 'concealed' in English. If this word is used for a certain form of creation, it is imperative that the form of creation under consideration should be such that is by its nature hidden and concealed, to the point that its appearance and visibility would be taken as a deviation from its nature, instead of being naturally visible and obvious like men. For instance, the word fluid would always be associated with something that flows, e.g. water; and it would be considered unnatural for it to stay static at one place. However, if someone were to associate the word fluid with something like a rock which is static in nature, and whose fluidity, not firmness, is considered to be unnatural, you would surely conclude that such a person has no idea what the word fluid means and he is using this word without considering its contextual meaning. Similarly, if the Qur'an would have used the word Jinn (hidden and concealed) to denote something that is neither hidden nor concealed, rather is quite visible and perceptible (like men), then this would have been a valid point to state that the one presenting this book is (God forbid) either mad or is ignorant of the meaning of the word Jinn. If this would indeed have been the case then rest assured that not a single Arab would have believed in the Qur'an. This is because while they can accept that the Jinn, deviating from their true nature, can miraculously become

visible and perceptible, they can never accept visible and perceptible men being referred to as jinn. When the Arab disbelievers had claimed that Muhammad ﷺ was being taught the Qur'an by some non-Arab national, they couldn't substantiate this claim with any proof; and when the Qur'an countered this allegation in the 103rd ayat of Surah anNahl with: لِسَانُ الَّذِي يُلْحِدُونَ إِلَيْهِ أَعْجَمِيٌّ وَهَٰذَا لِسَانٌ عَرَبِيٌّ مُبِينٌ *"he whom they maliciously hint at is of foreign tongue, while this (Qur'an) is plain Arabic speech"*, the Arabs were left speechless. However, had the Arab disbelievers found even one example in the entire Qur'an where the word 'jinn' has been used to refer to humans, they would have definitely responded by saying 'What sort of a plain Arabic speech is this where humans are being referred to as jinn?'

2. The word jinn was already widely accepted, renowned and documented among Arabs to refer to a supernatural, bodiless entity that was, by its very nature, imperceptible and could occasionally be seen in the form of herds or swarms, believing that they could influence them by their supernatural powers. Now, when the Qur'an used this documented word, it was imperative that it had to be used in the same sense as it was recognized and documented. The Qur'an claimed that it had been revealed in Arabic so that the Arabs, who were its primary addressees, could understand it. إِنَّا أَنزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ *"We have revealed this as a recitation in Arabic that you may fully understand"* (Surah Yusuf ayat 2). The only way to stand upon this claim was to use those very words, terminologies and forms of rhetoric that were familiar and renowned in Arab society. Even in case any particular Arabic word was required to be used in a sense that was not known or in common use, then that special meaning in which that word was being used could never go against its literal meaning, and its explanation would be provided

so that the Arabs could understand it in that particular intended context. But the meaning of the word 'jinn' that you have postulated is neither familiar with the Arabs, nor has the Qur'an ever issued a clarification that would lead us to believe that this word is not being used in the sense that was commonly known to the Arabs of that time. Now, if we were to accept your theory, it would repudiate the Qur'anic claim of it being revealed in plain, clear Arabic!

3. The Qur'an has made mention of the ignorant Arab's false assumptions that led them to hold the jinns and angels as partners in divinity, related them to God, sought refuge with them and even worshipped them. These assumptions were then falsified by categorically stating that the jinn were neither God's partners nor His children, rather they are as much a creation of God as humans are. The only difference is that humans have been created from clay, while the jinns have been created from fire. Despite this, both are equal addressees of God's commands, both would be held accountable before God and would receive the same punishment for the sins they commit. Hence, it is stupid of men to worship the jinns. Moreover, this is in fact a cause of humiliation for humans, given that humans are a superior form of creation as compared to jinns, what with their representative, *Iblees* being commanded to prostrate before Adam, and even cursed and expelled when he disobeyed this command. Man was bestowed with the high positions of vicegerency and prophethood, while the jinns were commanded to obey and follow him, as is mentioned in Surah alAhqaf and Surah alJinn. We also have a great person from among men, Prophet Solomon (Peace be upon him), to whom the jinns were made subservient. All these things that have been mentioned in the Qur'an to repudiate the ignorant claims of the Arabs would have been meaningful only if the Qur'anic term 'jinn'

referred to the same entity that the Arabs used to regard as partners in divinity and worthy of worship. In contrast, if the Qur'anic term 'jinn' would have alluded to 'humans', the entire argument would have turned futile in rectifying the beliefs of the Arabs, leaving the Arabs to continue holding their false beliefs regarding jinns.

4. If the Qur'an intended to refer to humans or a class within them while using the word 'jinn' at some particular place, we might as well ask what exactly was the need to use the word 'jinn' to refer to them? Why were they not referred to as humans? Why unnecessarily use such words that create confusion between fiery jinn and earthly jinn? This is an important and fundamental question regarding such interpretations that is usually ignored by our modern scholars who resort to vague elucidations while explaining the meaning of Qur'anic words. It never occurs to them that when familiar and documented words already exist in the Arab lexicon to convey a particular meaning, and even the Qur'an has used those very words to convey the same meaning wherever it required to do so, then why would it ever use certain other words at some particular place to convey a meaning (if indeed it intends to convey the same meaning at that place) that have never been used to convey that meaning? For instance, if Solomon had indeed been provided with men from Egypt and elsewhere who were highly skilled divers, ceramists, builders and artisans, then what kept God from simply stating that 'We had provided Solomon with such and such men'? Had God exhausted all suitable words in His vocabulary that He was compelled to use the words '*jinn*' and '*shayateen*' (satans) to refer to human beings?[1] Is it not the case that God has employed the

[1] Please refer Surah Saba ruku 2 and Surah Saad ruku 3

words '*insan*' (man) and '*bani Adam*' (Adam's progeny) to refer to human beings elsewhere in the Qur'an? And if there indeed was some unique quality in some men that they were required to be called 'jinn' and 'satans', then what kept God from clarifying that these 'jinn' were from the progeny of Adam?

The meaning of the word 'Jinn' in the Qur'an

After understanding these arguments, let us now see in what sense the Qur'an uses the word, 'Jinn'. You agree that the Qur'an speaks of 'jinns' and 'humans' both having different nature and origin. At several places, it has been said in very clear terms that 'Jinns' have originated from fire, while humans have originated from the earth. Along with using the word 'Jinn', when the Qur'an itself explains this meaning, it is but logical to expect the same meaning throughout the text of the Qur'an wherever it uses this word. [1] If some other meaning is intended, then it is necessary that either the Qur'an provides a similar explanation for this other meaning as well, or you should have a very strong case that allows you to understand a meaning of that word in a sense that goes against the Qur'anic explanation of that word. If the former is true, then we request you to present at least one ayat in your defense wherein 'jinn' has been defined as 'humans' just as they have been defined as 'fiery creations'. If this is not the case, then we have all the right to analyze the arguments you have stated (in your book), and ascertain whether they are strong enough to accept your interpretation of the word 'Jinn' as opposed to the meaning elucidated in the Qur'an.

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[1] The Qur'an does use the word '*jaann*' twice to refer to 'snakes'. But the Qur'an refers to the same things elsewhere as '*Tha'abaan*' and '*Hayyah*', which make it clear what the words '*jaann*' denote. Moreover, the word 'jaan' is commonly used for snakes among Arabs and every Arab can very easily refer to the context and realize that at that particular place, the word '*jaan*' refers to a snake.

The First Argument in favour of 'Jinn' referring to Humans

The basis on which the author has assumed jinns to be humans is stated in his book as follows:

> *"The word 'jinn' appears only in the Makkan surahs of the Qur'an. We don't find its mention in the Madinan surahs. The word 'ins' (human) has never been used except with 'jaann' in the entire Qur'an. It can thus be assumed that wherever the words jinn and ins have appeared together, the word jinn refers to a class among humans and not the fiery jinns."*

What kind of an argument is this? What has the meaning of the word *jinn* got to do with it appearing in the Makkan or Madinan part of the Qur'an or it occurring with or without the word '*ins*'? Kindly ponder over each of those ayaat where the words 'jinn' and 'ins' have appeared together. At none of these places would you find any hint that suggests that *ins* is a generic term and *jinn* is a specific term. Wherever the words jinn and ins have been used in the form of *ma'atoof* and *ma'atoof alaih*, there the *atf* (adjunction) has neither been used in the form of *atf al'aam alal'khaas*, nor in the form of *atf al'khaas alal'aam*, nor yet in the form of *atf alshai ala muraad fih* (The italicized phrases are forms of adjunction used in Arabic grammar… Tr). In order to confirm to either of these forms of adjunction, it is necessary that the listener should be acquainted beforehand that one of these (either *ma'atoof* or *ma'atoof alaih*) is generic and the other is specific or both are synonymous. For example, with regard the 28th ayat of Surah Nooh رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِيْ وَلِوَالِدَيَّ وَلِمَنْ دَخَلَ بَيْتِيَ مُؤْمِنًا وَّلِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ (which means: *"My Lord, forgive me and my parents, and whoever enters my house as a believer, and forgive all believers, both men and women"*), the listener can himself understand that the adjunction is in the form of *atf al'aam alal'khaas*. Alternatively, in the 7th ayat of Surah alAhzab, وَاِذْ اَخَذْنَا مِنَ النَّبِيّٖنَ مِيْثَاقَهُمْ وَمِنْكَ وَمِنْ نُّوْحٍ(which means: *"When we*

took the covenant from all prophets; and also from you and Noah"), it is clear that this is a form of *atf al'khaas alal'aam*. Similarly, in the clause, '*fa alqa qaulahu kizba wa maina*', the adjunction belongs to the category of *atf alshai ala muraad fih.*

Since none of these three forms are found in *jinn* and *ins*, it would have to be accepted that the 'and' between these words is used in the form of a suspended conjunction. This is because it cannot be known from any grammatical or logical deduction that there is a relation of generic-specific or equality between the two words. If there had been an intended relation of generic-specific between these two in the terminology of the Qur'an, and had it used a simple conjunction 'and' between these words without offering any clarification, then this would be counted as a blot on its literary value. In order to achieve this purpose, it should have at least said, '*al'insu wal jinnu minhum*' (the humans and the jinns amongst them), so that the listeners would have understood that the group being alluded to by the word 'jinn' simply refers to a group within humans, in deviation from the lexicon and familiar usage of that word.

But we need not go into the discussion on adjunctions. The author claims that wherever the words *jinn* and *ins* have appeared together in the Qur'an, the word 'jinn' refers to nothing but a class among humans. Now, kindly go through all those ayaat where these terms have been used together. The author's claim would by itself stand falsified if the list contains a number of ayaat in which the mutual exclusivity of these two groups is abundantly clear.

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ مِّنْ حَمَإٍ مَّسْنُونٍ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَالْجَآنَّ خَلَقْنٰهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ مِنْ نَّارِ السَّمُوْمِ ﴿٢٧﴾

"Surely, We brought man into being out of dry ringing clay, which was wrought from black mud, while We had brought the jinn into being before out of blazing fire." *(Surah alHijr ayaat 26-27)*

خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ كَالْفَخَّارِ ﴿١٤﴾ وَخَلَقَ الْجَآنَّ مِنْ مَّارِجٍ مِّنْ نَّارٍ ﴿١٥﴾

"He has created man from dry, rotten clay like the potter's, and has created the jinn from the flame of fire." *(Surah arRahman ayaat 14-15)*

فَيَوْمَئِذٍ لَّا يُسْئَلُ عَنْ ذَنْبِهٖٓ إِنْسٌ وَّلَا جَآنٌّ ﴿٣٩﴾

"On that Day there will be no need to ask either men or jinn about their sins." *(Surah arRahman ayat 39)*

لَمْ يَطْمِثْهُنَّ إِنْسٌ قَبْلَهُمْ وَلَا جَآنٌّ ﴿٥٦﴾

"...maidens whom no man or jinn has ever touched before." *(Surah arRahman ayat 56)*

كَانَ رِجَالٌ مِّنَ الْإِنْسِ يَعُوْذُوْنَ بِرِجَالٍ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ

"And that some from among the humans used to seek protection of some among the jinn."(Surah alJinn ayat 6)

وَيَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيْعًا ثُمَّ يَقُوْلُ لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اَهٰٓؤُلَآءِ اِيَّاكُمْ كَانُوْا يَعْبُدُوْنَ ﴿٤٠﴾
قَالُوْا سُبْحٰنَكَ اَنْتَ وَلِيُّنَا مِنْ دُوْنِهِمْ ۚ بَلْ كَانُوْا يَعْبُدُوْنَ الْجِنَّ ۚ اَكْثَرُهُمْ بِهِمْ مُّؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٤١﴾

"And on the Day when He will muster them all and will ask the angels: 'Are they the ones who worshipped you?' They will reply: 'Glory to You! You are our Protector, not they. Nay, they rather used to worship the jinn. Most of them believed in them'."
(Surah Saba ayaat 40-41)

وَجَعَلُوْا بَيْنَهٗ وَبَيْنَ الْجِنَّةِ نَسَبًا ۭ

"They have established a kinship between Allah and the jinns." *(Surah Saffat ayat 158)*

وَيَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيْعًا ۚ يٰمَعْشَرَ الْجِنِّ قَدِ اسْتَكْثَرْتُمْ مِّنَ الْإِنْسِ ۚ وَقَالَ اَوْلِيٰٓؤُهُمْ مِّنَ الْإِنْسِ رَبَّنَا اسْتَمْتَعَ بَعْضُنَا بِبَعْضٍ وَّبَلَغْنَآ اَجَلَنَا الَّذِيْٓ اَجَّلْتَ لَنَا ۭ

> *"And on the Day when He shall muster them all together, He will say (to the jinn): 'O assembly of jinn, you have seduced a good many of mankind'. And their companions from among the humans will say: 'Our Lord! We did indeed benefit from one another and now have reached the term which You had set for us'."*
>
> *(Surah alAn'am ayat 128)*

What do these ayaat prove? That humans and jinn are two separate, mutually exclusive forms of creation, or do they suggest that one of them is a subset of the other?

The Second Argument in favour of 'Jinn' referring to Humans

The second argument put forth is that the Satan and his progeny, whom the Qur'an collectively refers to as 'Jinn' are invisible, as stated in the 27th ayat of Surah alA'araf:

إِنَّهُ يَرَىٰكُمْ هُوَ وَقَبِيلُهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا تَرَوْنَهُمْ

> *"He and his hosts surely see you from whence you do not see them."*

In contrast, the Jinn who worked for Prophet Solomon were visible and used to work like human beings. This means that the Jinn working for Solomon were not the fiery Jinn, but mere human beings.

A single line reply to this argument would be that it has not been mentioned anywhere in the Qur'an that the Jinn working for Solomon were visible, or that they had human form, or that they could be seen by other people apart from Solomon. Hence, the ayat quoted by you to substantiate your claim does not go against those ayaat that speak of Solomon's jinns. Moreover, your assumption that they worked like human beings finds no mention in the Qur'an either. Where did you find written in the Qur'an that they used to dive like humans, or used to make utensils or construct buildings like humans or that they were fettered like humans? All we find in those passages is a

general reference to them being divers, ceramists, builders and artisans. This is not at all sufficient to conclude that their diving was similar to the diving of human beings, until it is proved that diving cannot be performed except by the method that is employed by humans, or that ceramic pottery can only be done in the manner done by humans. If you deduce that it is sufficient to declare an entity as human if an activity that is performed by human beings is being attributed to that entity, then it follows that even God is a human being (God forbid!). This is because even God has been attributed with those acts that human beings perform, e.g. speaking, seeing, listening etc.

Nonetheless, even if it is accepted for the sake of argument that they were visible like men and performed the tasks mentioned in the Qur'an exactly like men, it cannot be proved from the ayat you have quoted that they did not belong to the realm of creation that is invisible. It does not necessarily follow that if a being is normally invisible to man, it is impossible for it to deviate from its nature and become visible. The Qur'an carries but one mention of the satanic jinn being invisible, but this quality of being invisible has been attributed to angels at quite a few places. For instance:

In the 48th ayat of Surah alAnfal, Satan is reported to have told his followers that

إِنِّيٓ أَرَىٰ مَا لَا تَرَوْنَ

'I am able to see those armies of angels that are invisible to you'.

Again, in the 40th and 26th ayaat of Surah atTaubah, we have:

فَأَنزَلَ اللَّهُ سَكِينَتَهُ عَلَيْهِ وَأَيَّدَهُ بِجُنُودٍ لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا

"Then Allah caused His tranquility to descend upon him, and supported him with hosts you did not see."(40)

وَأَنزَلَ جُنُودًا لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا ۚ

"He sent down hosts whom you did not see." (26)

إِذْ جَآءَتْكُمْ جُنُودٌ فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيحًا وَجُنُودًا لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا ۚ

"When enemy hosts invaded you, We sent against them a wind and hosts that you did not see." (alAhzab: 9)

يَوْمَ يَرَوْنَ الْمَلَٰٓئِكَةَ لَا بُشْرَىٰ يَوْمَئِذٍ

"The day when they will behold angels, there will be no good news for them." (Surah alFurqan ayat 22)

Despite this, there are many instances where the Qur'an itself avers that the angels had appeared in human form. They were seen and heard not only by prophets, but by common folk as well. The question that comes to my mind is that why have you not cited these examples and claimed that the angels too are nothing but a group among mankind? Both jinn and angels are equally invisible. There are many instances of angels appearing in human form, while there's just one such incident concerning jinns. It is quite perplexing then, that while you do concede the fact that angels- abiding by Allah's command- used to miraculously deviate from their innate nature and often appear in human form, you come across only a single such instance that leads you to believe that the jinn appeared in human form, but it does not occur to you that they too might have been made perceptible and visible to Prophet Solomon in deviance from their innate nature, just as God had made the winds and birds subservient to his command and made him understand the language of animals as a response to his extraordinary prayer. Instead, you prefer to overlook all the explanations provided by the Qur'an and the Arabic lexicon and claim that it is only on this particular occasion that humans have been referred to as 'jinn', while the author has gone two steps ahead and cited this lone example to assume that an entire race of human beings is being referred to as 'jinn'! To add to his woes, he is unable to prove this from the Qur'an, while proofs contrary to his claim abound in the Qur'an and Arab

literature. Before resorting to publish such a claim, would it not have been better to ponder over the fact that there was nothing so impossible or inconceivable for God to make an invisible entity visible, that you had to go to such lengths to steer clear of this possibility? When you have accepted that even entities as subtle and fine as angels could be visible, then what kept you from accepting that entities as condense as satans could also become visible? All that the Qur'an says about jinns is that they are a fiery form of creation. On the contrary, it has been stated about Archangel Gabriel that he is a 'spirit', rather the 'spirit of God'! Accordingly, we have:

فَاَرْسَلْنَآ اِلَيْهَا رُوْحَنَا فَتَمَثَّلَ لَهَا بَشَرًا سَوِيًّا ﴿۱۷﴾

"We sent to her Our spirit and he appeared to her as a well-shaped man." (Surah Maryam ayat 17)

وَاِنَّهٗ لَتَنْزِيْلُ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿۱۹۲﴾ نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوْحُ الْاَمِيْنُ ﴿۱۹۳﴾

"Indeed this is a revelation from the Lord of the universe, which the truthful spirit has carried down." (Surah ashShuara ayaat 192-193)

When such an ethereal and intangible entity like the 'spirit of God' could become visible by God's command, then why is it so impossible or illogical or inconceivable for a 'blazing fire' -which is much closer to the physical and material realm[1]- to adopt a bodily form that you were

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[1] In my opinion, the fire with which jinn have been created is not the one which is ignited in material bodies by means of a chemical reaction. Rather, it is a different kind of fire. Since there was no word closer to '*naar*' (fire) in the human lexicon to connote it, God has used this word to convey its meaning. This is similar to the clause, 'Allah is the *noor* (light) of the heavens and the earth', in which 'noor' does not stand for the rays that radiate from a material luminescent body, but an abstract and sacred entity, that could not be conveyed to human beings by a word that was closer to its meaning than 'noor'. Nonetheless, even if it is accepted that the jinn were indeed created from this material fire that ignites by the combination of oxygen and carbon, then it is all the more logical and conceivable

compelled to open the doors of vague interpretations of the Qur'an to save yourself from adopting it on face value? As per the Qur'an, it is only God Who cannot be seen by human beings. This is being conveyed in: لَا تُدْرِكُهُ الْاَبْصَارُ وَهُوَ يُدْرِكُ الْاَبْصَارَ ۚ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيْفُ الْخَبِيْرُ ۝ *"No visual perception can encompass Him, even though He encompasses all visual perception."* (Surah alAn'am ayat 103) and قَالَ رَبِّ اَرِنِيْٓ اَنْظُرْ اِلَيْكَ ۭ قَالَ لَنْ تَرٰىنِيْ *"He said: 'My Lord! Reveal Yourself to me, that I may look upon You'. He replied: never can you see me."* (Surah alA'araf ayat 143). It is only God Who truly possesses intrinsic qualities. None of the other forms of creation possess this as an intrinsic quality. However, God has created some entities that are not naturally visible to man, but it is nevertheless in His power to make them visible to us or to make our vision strong enough to perceive them.

The Third Argument in favour of 'Jinn' referring to Humans

You and the author have also tried to garner support for your stand by stating that the divers and artisans working for Solomon have been called '*shayateen*' (satans), and that the term 'satans' has also been used to denote human beings apart from jinns. You thus conclude that these divers and artisans should be assumed to be 'human satans' by virtue of them being visible and because they performed human activities.

Instead of calling this an argument, I would simply say that this is a misunderstanding on two accounts:

i. The Qur'an does not refer to Solomon's workers as 'satans' alone; it refers to them as 'jinn' as well:

وَحُشِرَ لِسُلَيْمٰنَ جُنُوْدُهٗ مِنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْاِنْسِ وَالطَّيْرِ

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that these jinn of material origin become visible and perceptible, as compared to the angels who have a spiritual origin.

"Hosts of jinn and humans and birds were marshaled for Solomon and were kept under his control."
(Surah alNaml ayat 17)

وَمِنَ الْجِنِّ مَنْ يَّعْمَلُ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ بِاِذْنِ رَبِّهٖ ؕ... يَعْمَلُوْنَ لَهٗ مَا يَشَآءُ مِنْ مَّحَارِيْبَ وَتَمَاثِيْلَ وَجِفَانٍ كَالْجَوَابِ وَقُدُوْرٍ رّٰسِيٰتٍ... فَلَمَّا قَضَيْنَا عَلَيْهِ الْمَوْتَ مَا دَلَّهُمْ عَلٰى مَوْتِهٖۤ اِلَّا دَآبَّةُ الْاَرْضِ تَاْكُلُ مِنْسَاَتَهٗ ۚ فَلَمَّا خَرَّ تَبَيَّنَتِ الْجِنُّ اَنْ لَّوْ كَانُوْا يَعْلَمُوْنَ الْغَيْبَ مَا لَبِثُوْا فِى الْعَذَابِ الْمُهِيْنِ ﴿۱۴﴾

"And We subdued for him jinn who, by his Lord's permission, worked before him... They made for him whatever he would desire: stately buildings, basins like water-troughs and huge, built-in cauldrons... When We executed Our decree of death on Solomon, nothing indicated to the jinn that he was dead except a worm eating away his staff. So when Solomon fell down, the Jinn realized that had they known what lies in the realm beyond perception, they would not have continued to be in this humiliating chastisement[1]."
(Surah Saba ayaat 12-14)

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[1] It is worth considering that in this ayat, the word human has not appeared along with jinn, and there's also a hint that these were those jinn who prided themselves over possessing the knowledge of the unseen, and about whom the Arabs also assumed to have such knowledge. A group among these jinn later listens to the Qur'an and tells its fellow companions that we have now been prevented from acquainting ourselves of the unseen because:

وَّاَنَّا لَمَسْنَا السَّمَآءَ فَوَجَدْنٰهَا مُلِئَتْ حَرَسًا شَدِيْدًا وَّشُهُبًا ﴿۸﴾ وَّاَنَّا كُنَّا نَقْعُدُ مِنْهَا مَقَاعِدَ لِلسَّمْعِ ؕ فَمَنْ يَّسْتَمِعِ الْاٰنَ يَجِدْ لَهٗ شِهَابًا رَّصَدًا ﴿۹﴾

"We tried to pry (the secrets of) the heaven, but we found it full of terrible guards and shooting meteors, and we would take up stations in the heaven to try to hear but anyone who now attempts to listen finds a shooting meteor in wait for him." (alJinn ayaat 8-9)

The method of obtaining the news of the unseen which is mentioned in this ayat is even beyond human comprehension, let alone human ability.

This makes it clear that those divers and artisans were satanic jinn, not satanic humans.

ii. You and the author seem to be oblivious of the fact that the Qur'an never refers to humans as *shaitaan* or *shayateen* per se; these terms have always been used to refer to Iblees and his progeny. If at some place, a particular group of human beings has been referred to as satans in the sense of an adjective, then it has either been overtly or covertly mentioned that at that particular place 'satans' refers to human beings. For instance, وَكَذٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَا لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ عَدُوًّا شَيٰطِيْنَ الْاِنْسِ وَالْجِنِّ *"And so it is that against every prophet We have set up satans from among human beings and jinn."* (Surah alAn'am ayat 112) and وَاِذَا لَقُوا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا قَالُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا ۚ وَاِذَا خَلَوْا اِلٰى شَيٰطِيْنِهِمْ ۙ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا مَعَكُمْ *"When they meet their satans (in privacy), they say: Surely we are with you."* (Surah alBaqarah ayat 14)

The implications of having Faith in the Qur'an

From all the above discussions, we realize that there exists not a single strong argument that allows us to specify a meaning for the word 'jinn' that has been used in the story of Prophet Solomon and elsewhere that goes against the meaning explained in the Qur'an itself at various places. In such a case, when one does not have any proof to substantiate his claim, it is not at all permissible for a person who believes in the divine status of the Qur'an to declare an entity- that the Qur'an has called 'jinn', not 'human'- as 'human' on the mere basis of his own assumption. Such an assumption can only be entertained if the natural outcomes that we are habituated to comprehend and relate to do not confirm to the things attributed to the jinn at various places in the Qur'an. But in the same sense, there are also certain other things mentioned in the Qur'an as well that do not confirm to what we are accustomed to observe and experience in our routine lives. For instance, fire turning cold for a particular person, a staff transforming

into a snake at one occasion, the sea parting away one night and making way for a dry path, a person making birds of clay and blowing life into them and resurrecting the dead, some young men sleeping in a cave for three hundred years and waking up alive, a man waking up from death after a hundred years and finding his food completely fresh, a man remaining alive for nine hundred and fifty years, not in a state of meditation, but engrossed in the tiring work of propagating Islam among a defiant people….

There is absolutely no need to interpret these events if we do not believe the Qur'an to have been authored by an Omniscient, Omnipotent and Omnipresent God. We can summarily dismiss all these events by simply saying that we have never seen or heard any such thing. But if we agree that the Qur'an is the word of God, who has absolute knowledge of the finest details of every event from the beginning of time to the end, whose miracles we keep witnessing in the sun, the stars, the earth and our own selves, then we should have no qualms in accepting any and every extraordinary and supernatural event as it is written in the Qur'an on face value. Going one step ahead, a true believer would not hesitate in believing in the words of the Qur'an or resort to an interpretation that confirms with observable phenomenon even if it would have been mentioned therein that on one occasion the moon had been placed on Mount Everest or that God had on some day caused the sun to rise from the west instead of the east. This is because everything that exists or happens in this unimaginably vast universe- even the growth of a blade of a grass or a strand of hair on the body of an animal- is as much amazing a miracle as the placement of the moon on Mount Everest and the rise of the sun from the west. The only difference is that while we are accustomed to seeing the former set of miraculous events in our daily lives, we don't come across the latter. Hence, we fail to realize that the former events are also miracles in their own right. On the other hand, when we are informed about the latter set of

events, we are left dumbfounded, and our minds (which have been trained to believe only in the seen and experienced things) hesitate in accepting them as facts. I do not say that we should accept such things blindly, without verifying the source of the information. For a Believer, however, there can be no source of information more authentic than the Qur'an itself, because he firmly believes it to be the Word of God and, thereby, the best possible testimony to His own actions. Alternately, he who doubts the Qur'an to be the Word of God has all the right to doubt each and every claim of the Qur'an, whether it confirms to the routine or not.

Tarjuman ul Qur'an
Shawwal 1353 AH/ January 1935 CE

What does Khilafat mean?

This article was also written in reference to the same discussion as was the previous article, 'Jinn- Facts and Myths'. The writer has claimed that the 'khilafat' that Adam (Peace be upon him) was granted by God was not in the sense that God had made him His vicegerent on earth. Instead, what it means is that Adam was made to succeed the forms of creation that existed on the earth at that time. The writer has further claimed that khilafat stands for succession alone; hence the concept of 'God's khilafat' is absolutely meaningless. We had offered a brief critique of this letter in Tarjuman ul Qur'an. The aforementioned writer followed that up with another letter, in response to which I have written this article....

First and foremost, let us refer to the Arabic dictionary to find out what whether it is true that the word khilafat means only succession, or it means vicegerency as well.

Imam Raghib Asfahani writes in his Mufradat:
"Khilafat means to represent someone, either by virtue of the delegating authority's absence or because of his death, or because of his disability or in order to elevate the status of the person who has been made the representative/vicegerent."

Lane, in his renowned work, Arabic English Lexicon, has averred that the word 'Khalifa' stands for both- 'Successor' as well as 'Vicegerent'.

The absence or death of the delegating authority is not a prerequisite to khilafat. Imam Raghib writes: 'X person becomes Y person's *khalifa* means that X has been nominated to do Y's work, either along with Y or after Y.'

The different derivatives of this word's root lead to different shades of meaning:

Khalafa, Khilafatan means to come later or stay behind. "In Arabic, khalafa and khilafatan mean that he succeeded him and his turn came after him."
(Taj alUroos).

The Qur'an uses this word in various forms:

فَخَلَفَ مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِهِمۡ خَلۡفٌ وَّرِثُوا الۡكِتٰبَ

"Then others succeeded them who inherited the scriptures." (Surah alA'araf ayat 169)

وَقَالَ مُوۡسٰى لِاَخِيۡهِ هٰرُوۡنَ اخۡلُفۡنِىۡ فِىۡ قَوۡمِىۡ

"And Moses said to Aaron, his brother: Take my place among my people." (Surah alA'araf ayat 142)

قَالَ بِئۡسَمَا خَلَفۡتُمُوۡنِىۡ مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِىۡ

"How wretched is that by which you have replaced me after (my departure)." (Surah alA'araf ayat 150)

وَلَوۡ نَشَآءُ لَجَعَلۡنَا مِنۡكُمۡ مَّلٰٓـئِكَةً فِى الۡاَرۡضِ يَخۡلُفُوۡنَ ﴿٦٠﴾

"If We had so willed We could have made some of you into angels to become your successors on earth."
(Surah alZukhruf ayat 60)

Takhalluf means to lag behind.

مَا كَانَ لِاَهۡلِ الۡمَدِيۡنَةِ وَمَنۡ حَوۡلَهُمۡ مِّنَ الۡاَعۡرَابِ اَنۡ يَّتَخَلَّفُوۡا عَنۡ رَّسُوۡلِ اللّٰهِ

"It did not behove the people of Madinah and the Bedouin Arabs around them that they should refrain from accompanying the Messenger of Allah and stay behind." (Surah atTaubah ayat 120)

Akhlafa means to return a lost object or to compensate for it.

وَمَاۤ اَنۡفَقۡتُمۡ مِّنۡ شَىۡءٍ فَهُوَ يُخۡلِفُهٗ‌ ۚ وَهُوَ خَيۡرُ الرّٰزِقِيۡنَ ﴿٣٩﴾

"Whatever you spend, He will replace it. He is the Best of all providers." (Surah Saba ayat 39)

It has been mentioned in a Hadith that 'Allah has taken upon Himself to give back to the warrior whatever he might have spent.'

Khallafa and Istakhlafa means to make someone *khalifa* or make someone his successor. (Taj alUroos)

If while saying Istakhlafa, the delegating authority has not been specified, then it would mean 'he has been made my vicegerent', and if the delegating authority has been specified, then it would mean 'he has been made the vicegerent of the specified person'. (Aqrab alMuarid). Accordingly, wherever the Qur'an only says Istakhlaf without specifying any delegating authority, e.g.:

لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ

"Allah has promised those of you who believe and do righteous deeds that He will surely bestow power on them in the land even as He bestowed power on those that preceded them" (Surah anNoor ayat 55),

it would mean that Allah has made someone His Own vicegerent; and wherever the delegating authority has been specified, it would mean that he has been made to succeed or to replace that person. But keep in mind that whenever there's a mention of an old vicegerent being replaced by a new vicegerent, then both the meanings would be equally valid- that the delegating authority has nominated a new person replacing the earlier office bearer, and also that he has nominated this person as his vicegerent after (or following) the previous person. For instance, if it is said that 'Istakhlafal Malik Lord Irwin ba'ad Lord Reading fi Walayatul Hind', then it would mean that 'The King appointed Lord Irwin after Lord Reading to replace the latter as the Viceroy of India' and it would also mean that 'The King appointed Lord Irwin Viceroy of India to act as his vicegerent in India after Lord Reading'. There is no contradiction in these two meanings, and both are equally correct at one and the same time. Similarly, the 133rd ayat of Surah alAn'am can be interpreted as:

إِنْ يَّشَأْ يُذْهِبْكُمْ وَيَسْتَخْلِفْ مِنْۢ بَعْدِكُمْ مَّا يَشَآءُ

a. *"If He wills, He can put you away and cause whomever He wills to succeed you."*
b. *"If He wills, He will make someone else His vicegerent in your stead."*

As far as the Arabic lexicon is concerned, both these meanings are equally admissible and correct.

'Ja'alahu khalifatan' means to make someone *khalifa*. Whether it alludes to vicegerent or successor is an additional interpretation, which cannot be arrived at unless there is a mention of whose vicegerent or successor he is being made- specified or unspecified. Accordingly, wherever the Qur'an has specified the predecessor along with 'ja'ala khalifa', the meaning of the sentence is quite clear. E.g.

وَاذْكُرُوْٓا اِذْ جَعَلَكُمْ خُلَفَآءَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ قَوْمِ نُوْحٍ

"He made you successors after the people of Noah"
(Surah alA'araf ayat 69)

and

وَاذْكُرُوْٓا اِذْ جَعَلَكُمْ خُلَفَآءَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ عَادٍ

"And call to mind when after Aad, He made you their successors" (Surah alA'araf ayat 74)

and

ثُمَّ جَعَلْنٰكُمْ خَلٰٓئِفَ فِي الْاَرْضِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ لِنَنْظُرَ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ۝

"Now We have appointed you as their successors in the earth to see how you act." (Surah Yunus ayat 14)

However, where there is no mention of the predecessor, then we would have to assume whose khalifa he is being alluded to. Consider the following ayaat:

يٰدَاوٗدُ اِنَّا جَعَلْنٰكَ خَلِيْفَةً فِي الْاَرْضِ

"O David, We have appointed you khalifatan on earth" (Surah Saad ayat 26)

and

وَيَجْعَلُكُمْ خُلَفَآءَ الْاَرْضِ

"Who makes you khulafa of the earth"
(Surah anNaml ayat 62)

and

وَهُوَ الَّذِىْ جَعَلَكُمْ خَلٰٓئِفَ الْاَرْضِ

"It is He Who has made you khalaifa over the earth"
(Surah alAn'am ayat 165)

and

اِنِّىْ جَاعِلٌ فِى الْاَرْضِ خَلِيْفَةً

"I am about to make a khalifa on earth"
(Surah alBaqarah ayat 30).

In these, the question arises that who is man or a group of men made to succeed? If you reply by saying 'previous creations' or 'previous communities', then this would not only be a far-stretched interpretation, but it also refuses to concur with some of these ayaat. Take for instance,

وَيَجْعَلُكُمْ خُلَفَآءَ الْاَرْضِ

"Who makes you khulafa of the earth"
(Surah anNaml ayat 62).

Here, khulafa has been attributed to the earth, as is evident in the translation. How can one interpret this as 'successors of the people who lived on the earth before you'? If the ayat:

اِنِّىْ جَاعِلٌ فِى الْاَرْضِ خَلِيْفَةً

"I am about to make a khalifa on earth"
(Surah alBaqarah ayat 30),

is interpreted as 'I am going to make someone succeed those already living on earth', then the question that comes up is 'Has God made any mention of those who already lived on earth, and are now to be succeeded by men?' If there is any such mention, kindly provide references to the

same. If there is no such mention, then consider which of the following two interpretations is more acceptable from the lexical and literary point of view- 'I am going to make a successor to the people living on earth' or 'I am about to appoint my vicegerent on earth'. If the listener only understands Arabic and is oblivious of the arguments that the author has built up to support his stand, then which if these two meanings would he adopt?

The concept of monarchy in Khilafat

After discussing the literal meaning of the word *Khalifa*, I request you to ponder over the interpretation of this word that has been presented by you and the author. You have written,

'*Khilafat fil arz* refer to the succession of monarchy and rule on earth.'

The author has interpreted the 30th ayat of Surah Baqarah as, "I am about to make a king on earth" and notes:

> *'Adam was made the king of earth by replacing those who lived on earth.'*

If the meaning of *khilafat* is only succeeding or replacing or coming later, then why has the concept of monarchy and rule been included therein? If the spirit of succession is devoid of this concept- and it is indeed so- then the only way this meaning can creep in is if this succession has been received from a king or ruler. So if man received this succession, which in your own opinion had a shade of monarchy, then it must necessarily follow that man must have succeeded a monarch. Now, does the study of the Qur'an prove the existence of any form of creation on the earth, before the advent of man, who could have been a monarch? Monarchy requires knowledge, wisdom, authority, will power, ability and other such qualities, without which the world and its inhabitants cannot be ruled. Academic research has conclusively

proved that no such qualified entity existed on the earth before humans. The Qur'an also supports this finding. It says that the best form of creation that existed before humans, i.e. the angels, which have been called 'respectable slaves' had no knowledge of things.

ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ ۙ فَقَالَ اَنْۢبِـُٔوْنِىْ بِاَسْمَآءِ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ۝ قَالُوْا سُبْحٰنَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَآ اِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا ؕ

"Then He showed them to the angels and said: If you are right then tell Me the names of these things. They said: Glory to You! We have no knowledge except what You taught us." *(Surah alBaqarah ayat 31,32)*

They were completely devoid of will power and freedom of choice.

لَّا يَعْصُوْنَ اللّٰهَ مَآ اَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُوْنَ مَا يُؤْمَرُوْنَ ۝

"Angels who never disobey what He has commanded them, and always do what they are bidden."
(Surah Tahreem ayat 6)

The other form of creation was that of Jinn. There is no evidence in the Qur'an to suggest that the Jinn were rulers of the earth. As for animals and vegetation, they are not worth a discussion. Then who, I pray, was vested with monarchy and succeeded by man?

Even if it is accepted that this *khilafat* is the inheritance of old inhabitants of the earth, and that these inhabitants ruled the earth before humans, then were they absolute rulers of the world or was their rule also a form of vicegerency? You cannot adopt the former option, because Islam avers that the absolute and true ruler is none other than God; all other authorities being subject to His will. If you adopt the second option, then you would have to either admit to an unending chain of successors or you would have to accept that the source of this *khilafat* is God Almighty, no matter how many successive *khulafa* might have got this rule, and the essence of monarchy can fit in

only if this *khilafat* is interpreted as God's *khilafat* or vicegerency.

Signs from the Qur'an

Now, I would like to present some passages from the Qur'an that make it clear that the *khilafat* that has been given to man is actually God's vicegerency.

The Qur'an says that God has created man in the best of moulds (Surah atTeen ayat 4), God has created him with His own two hands (Surah Saad ayat 75), breathed into him of His spirit (Surah Sajdah ayat 9), taught him the names of all things, i.e. gave him knowledge (Surah alBaqarah ayat 31), and subjected to him all that is in the heavens and the earth (Surah alJathiyah ayat 13).

When man was adorned with these qualities, God commanded the angels to prostrate before him. The way in which this has been presented in Surah Saad needs to be especially pondered upon:

إِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ إِنِّيْ خَالِقٌۢ بَشَرًا مِّنْ طِيْنٍ ﴿٧١﴾ فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيْهِ
مِنْ رُّوْحِيْ فَقَعُوْا لَهُ سٰجِدِيْنَ ﴿٧٢﴾ فَسَجَدَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ كُلُّهُمْ أَجْمَعُوْنَ ﴿٧٣﴾ إِلَّآ إِبْلِيْسَ
اِسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٧٤﴾ قَالَ يٰٓإِبْلِيْسُ مَا مَنَعَكَ أَنْ تَسْجُدَ لِمَا خَلَقْتُ
بِيَدَيَّ ۖ أَسْتَكْبَرْتَ أَمْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الْعَالِيْنَ ﴿٧٥﴾ قَالَ أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِّنْهُ خَلَقْتَنِيْ مِنْ
نَّارٍ وَّخَلَقْتَهُ مِنْ طِيْنٍ ﴿٧٦﴾ قَالَ فَاخْرُجْ مِنْهَا فَإِنَّكَ رَجِيْمٌ ﴿٧٧﴾

When your Lord said to the angels: "Verily I am creating a human from clay. After I have created him and breathed into him my spirit, fall you down, prostrating yourselves to him". Then the angels, all of them, prostrated themselves before Adam except Iblees. He waxed proud and became one of the unbelievers. The Lord said, "O Iblees, what prevented you from prostrating yourself before him whom I created of my two hands. Are you waxing proud, or fancy yourself to be exalted?" He replied, "I am

nobler than he. You created me from fire and created him from clay." He said, "Get out of here; surely you are accursed." (Surah Saad ayaat 71-77)

These ayaat tell us that the reason they were commanded to prostrate to man was that God had created him from His own two hands, which means that he was the ultimate specimen of God's skill and craftsmanship. He also breathed into him a special spirit from Himself and thus created within him those qualities that are possessed by God, albeit in a much diluted form. After creating man with such grandeur and endowing him with such qualities, it was announced that 'We are about to make him *khalifa* on earth'. When the angels voiced their apprehensions concerning this decision, God showcased the greatest quality man possessed, i.e. knowledge (as is mentioned in Surah alBaqarah). Now that it was proved that man was eligible for the *khilafat*, the angels were commanded to acknowledge his position and prostrate before him as a sign of this acknowledgment. All the angels acknowledged him and fell down in prostration. The Satan, however, refused to acknowledge his *khilafat* and was hence banished.

What do these statements indicate? The supremacy of man over all other forms of creation is exhibited. This supremacy is also proved by means of an open competition. It is announced that he is a reflection of God's own qualities and God has breathed into him a special spirit from Himself. A command is issued to the angels that they should prostrate before him. Along with all this, it is also announced that 'We are about to make him *khalifa* on earth'. Do these preparations with which the announcement of the *khalifa* has been made indicate that he was merely a successor of the previous inhabitants of earth? Had it only been the case that a new form of creation was to replace the existing inhabitants then what was the need to announce his appointment in front of angels and to exhibit his qualifications in such a manner? And why would the angels be commanded to prostrate before a creation that was

merely going to replace the existing inhabitants of this world?

What does God's Khilfat mean?

The concept of 'God's Khilafat' has been made clear elsewhere in the Qur'an:

إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَنْ يَّحْمِلْنَهَا وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ ظَلُوْمًا جَهُوْلًا ﴿٧٢﴾

"We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to carry it and were afraid of doing so; but man carried it. Surely, he is wrong-doing, ignorant (of the consequences)."

(Surah alAhzab ayat 72)

In this ayat, 'trust' refers to Freedom of Choice, Responsibility and Accountability. It means that the skies, the earth and the mountains did not have it in them to shoulder this burden. There was not a single form of creation before man who could accept this position. Finally, man came and shouldered this burden.

What we understand is:

1. There was no creation before man in the heavens or the earth who was shouldering the burden of this trust. Man is the first such creation to have done so. This makes it obvious that as far as bearing the trust is concerned, he is not a successor to anyone.
2. The word *khilafat* that is mentioned in Surah alBaqarah and the word trust used here connote one and the same thing. This I say, because there the angels were made to realize that it is man, not they, who was eligible for *khilafat*. Here, it is said that there was nothing in the heavens and the earth that could bear Our trust; it was only man who lifted this burden.
3. The concept of *khilafat* explains the word 'trust' used here and these two words throw light on the correct

position of man in this world. Man is the ruler of this world, but his rule is not absolute. Instead, it has been delegated. God has referred to these delegated powers as ‘trust’ and has called man His vicegerent because he exercises these powers that God has delegated to him. This is the very meaning of the word *khalifa* in this context.

Tarjuman ul Qur’an
Zil Qadah 1353 AH/ February 1935 CE

The Un-Islamic Idea of Tolerance

The 193rd ayat of Surah alBaqarah reads, وَقٰتِلُوْهُمْ حَتّٰى لَا تَكُوْنَ فِتْنَةٌ وَّيَكُوْنَ الدِّيْنُ لِلّٰهِ ۭ فَاِنِ انْتَهَوْا فَلَا عُدْوَانَ اِلَّا عَلَي الظّٰلِمِيْنَ "*Keep on fighting against them until there is no (more) fitna and the way prescribed by Allah prevails. But if they desist, then know that hostility is not permissible, except against the wrong-doers.*" Its explanation in the Tafheemul Qur'an says, "Here, 'if they desist' does not mean that 'if the disbelievers desist from their disbelief or paganism'. Rather, it means that 'if the disbelievers desist from fitna'. [Fitna refers to discord, dissension, civil strife, persecution, oppression, injustice, seduction, trial and torment... Tr]. Everyone, be they disbelievers, polytheists or atheists are free to have faith in whatever ideology they believe in and worship whoever they wish. While we would certainly advise and counsel such a person to pull him out of his ignorance, we would not fight him for this. However, he has no right whatsoever to impose his false laws on God's land in refutation of divinely ordained laws or to make God's people subservient to someone other than God. Such a fitna would be crushed with the sword and the swords of believers would not be sheathed until the disbelievers desist from their actions."

A scholar objected to this explanation on the following grounds:

1. This seems to means that Islam, which espouses peace and security, allows for interference in other people's religion to the point of waging a war against them. This would then go against the clause, لَآ اِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّيْنِ "*There is no compulsion in deen*"(Surah alBaqarah ayat 256).

2. The clause, لَكُمْ دِيْنُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِيْنِ *"To you your deen and to me mine"* (Surah alKafiroon ayat 6) also makes it evident that dissenters are free to abide by their religion and beliefs. He who has been given Freedom of Faith should also be free to propagate his faith because he considers *that* to be true. We find evidence of this freedom in the Qur'an and instances of mutual debates, as in: وَلَا تُجَادِلُوْٓا اَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ اِلَّا بِالَّتِيْ هِيَ اَحْسَنُ *"Argue not with the People of the Book except in the fairest manner"*(Surah alAnkaboot ayat 46). The places of worship and religious rituals of non-Muslims have remained safe from Islamic interference. The People of the Book were granted the freedom to observe their religious rites even in the Masjid e Nabavi. We also have Prophet Joseph (Peace be upon him) who opted to be an employee of the pagan Egyptian ruler. All we should do is to peacefully continue with the task of propagating Islam, as is apparent in the clause: يٰصَاحِبَيِ السِّجْنِ ءَاَرْبَابٌ مُّتَفَرِّقُوْنَ خَيْرٌ اَمِ اللّٰهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ *"O fellow prisoners! Is it better that there be diverse lords, or just Allah, the One, the Irresistible?"*(Surah Yusuf ayat 39). In a similar manner, others are also entitled to propagate their views.

3. Going by the underlined sentence, Muslims would never be able to lead a life of peace in a mixed population. Why would the non-Muslims display mutual cooperation and tolerance with them even in their cultural and social issues when their own political and basic ideologies come in the way? As per your view, such Muslims would be required to declare jihad even if they happen to reside in Turkey or Iran, because there the law of the state is not Islamic. In today's global political scenario, it would become impossible for any organization to engage in cooperation and mutual interaction with non-Muslims, because your interpretation does not allow for any such common practice. If an Islamic organization is entitled to

propagate its religion, then it should give the same rights to non-Muslims, especially when it is in power. 'Like for others what you like for yourself'. Was the Agreement of Madinah promising mutual cooperation that was contracted between Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and the Jews of Madinah based on these clauses? The initial Makkan period does not confirm to your interpretation. In other words, the very existence of such a group is a threat to the non-Muslim society because it would resort to an armed struggle to overthrow the existing regime and establish its own system as soon as it finds the required resources to do so. Who would tolerate this?

A few sentences would suffice to reply to these objections. However, these objections are backed up by misunderstandings of mammoth proportions, and they have penetrated the Muslim society at all levels. Owing to this, Muslims are unable to understand even the fundamental requirements of Islam. This compels us to present a detailed discussion on this topic....

For the moment, let us keep aside questions like 'In what sense does Islam espouse peace and harmony', 'what is the true meaning of the two ayaat quoted by him' and whether Prophet Joseph had come to discharge his duties as a prophet or to simply seek employment. Before indulging in these discussions, let us first ask: What exactly is Islam's mission on earth? Has it come to tame human beings to act as stooges of oppressors, so that whenever a tyrant seeks to rule the world, he might find an army of loyal slaves among Muslims? Has it taken upon itself to provide peaceful citizens to monarchies and governments the world over, so that Islam's workshop might provide them with all sorts of lame and limb spare parts to run their machinery, irrespective of how suppressive that regime might be? Is it supposed to just give out a few sermons on faith and morality and create such flexibility in its followers that they might easily blend in every kind of society? If this is indeed

the case, then there is not much difference between Islam and Buddhism or Paulism. We fail to understand why, then, would the book of such a religion have such dreadful words like 'kill them'. Instead of encouraging its followers to war and jihad, it should have told its enemies:

> *"Why should you ever kill us? Neither do we seek to revolt against the government, nor do we seek any change or reformation in the social system. Irrespective of whoever is in power, our job is to live under his rule as peaceful subjects; and loyalty to the incumbent dispensation is our religion and faith. Why then do you feel intimidated of us? As for our religious rituals and customs, they should have nothing to do with you. Which of your cultural establishments or interests is being affected by our ideology or worship?"*

Had this reply being given in acceptable terms, and Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and his companions would have continued to render them their loyal services, then there is no reason why the Quraish would have acted any differently from our present British rulers[1] and would have put prohibitions on the azan and prayers in masajid or the establishment of community centres.

However, if this is not the case, and Islam has its own system of life which lays down laws regulating faith, morality, acts of worship and all issues concerning individual and collective affairs- and if Islam calls people to accept this entire system- and if it claims that its system is the only system that is right, that the success of mankind lies in it alone, and that all other systems are false- then it is imperative that Islam should seek to establish itself on earth and do away with all other systems. Presenting a system of life as true and proper, but not calling people to practically establish it is absolutely ridiculous. Even more ridiculous is to claim that other systems are false and yet tolerate their

[1] These passages were written in 1942.

authority. It is impossible to follow a system while being under the authority of another system. Hence, only an imbecile person would insist that people follow the system he presents, and at the same time encourage people to live as peaceful and loyal subjects under another system.

Thus, it is within the very nature of Islam that when it calls people towards its particular system of life, it seeks to abolish all other systems and establish its own in their stead. For this, it is also natural for it to command its followers to adopt all those forms of struggle that are required to achieve this end. The yardstick it uses to evaluate its followers' faith and commitment is whether they exhaust their lives and resources in this struggle or are they content at spending their lives under false systems. Kindly study the Qur'an and ahadith from an unbiased perspective and you would get the resounding answer that it is *this* that Islam espouses, and not what you have claimed.

Now if this is the truth, and it is this truth that we have borne witness to, then our existence should definitely pose a challenge to every non-Muslim rule. Whether someone tolerates it or not, whether cooperation and interaction with non-Muslims is possible or not, it is our duty in the capacity of true Muslims to strive and establish the rule of God wherever it has not been established. Our being Muslims does not hinge on the condition that those who are opposed to our ideology should necessarily tolerate our struggle; nor is cooperation and interaction with non-Muslims so crucial to us that we would forego our struggle to establish the system we firmly believe in simply because it would hamper this cooperation and interaction.

There is no doubt whatsoever that Islam does espouse peace and security, but it regards true peace and security as that which is attained by the implementation of God's laws. If someone understands the call for peace and security as that by which all businesses continue to flourish unabated under the influence of Satanic systems, without Muslims

even raising their eyebrows, then he has grossly misunderstood Islam's point of view. He ought to clearly understand that Islam does not espouse such a concept of peace and security. It does not want the peace that has been established by others, but that which it itself establishes, and it is in this peace that it sees the security of all mankind.

As for the clause, 'there is no compulsion in *deen*', then all it means is that Islam does not forcibly shove its ideology down someone's throat; because faith is not something that someone can be compelled to have. Similarly, it does not force its acts of worship on anyone, because they are also directly linked to faith and without proper faith these acts of worship lose their meaning. It is ready to offer absolute freedom to everyone on these matters. However, it is not ready to allow the laws of society, on the foundations of which the state is structured, to be legislated by someone other than God or that those who rebel against God might execute them on God's land, while Muslims live in subservience to them. In this case, it is imperative for one group to interfere in the 'religion' of another group. If Muslims do not interfere in the 'religion of disbelief', then disbelievers would interfere in the 'religion of Islam' which would result in it influencing a major part of Muslims' lives. Hence, instead of allowing this interference to be carried out by disbelievers, Islam requires Muslims to step forward and gain control over the entire system while allowing non-Muslims to adhere to their own beliefs and modes of worship under the principle of 'there is no compulsion in *deen*'.

Next, we would like to have a look at those arguments that have been put forward by the dissenter and are routinely believed to be true by those who share his thought process.

His first argument is that when you understand *fitna* as the rule of disbelief and the authority of disbelievers, and the purpose of jihad and war in your view is to abolish what

you believe to be '*fitna*' and establish the '*deen* of God' in its stead, then it follows that Islam supports two mutually conflicting ideologies. On the one hand it says, 'there is no compulsion in *deen*' while on the other hand it rejects the right of non-Muslims to run the state as per their ideologies, prevents them from implementing their laws and forcibly imposes the '*deen* of God' over them. While it gives non-Muslims the liberty to follow and abide by their own religion by saying 'to you your *deen* and to me mine', it also wages war against them for the same reason that they govern their affairs according to their own beliefs and principles. It is obvious that Islam can never have such contradicting ideologies. Hence, your interpretation is faulted.

The second argument is that had the existence of a non-Muslim state been considered as *fitna*, and had Muslims been commanded to abolish it, then how was it possible for Prophet Joseph (Peace be upon him) to apply for the post of a minister in a non-Muslim government and discharge his duties in accordance with the Egyptian Royal Law, as is alluded to in the ayat:

مَا كَانَ لِيَأْخُذَ أَخَاهُ فِي دِينِ الْمَلِكِ

"He could not have taken his brother within the law of the king." *(Surah Yusuf ayat 76)*

The third argument is that if we agree to your interpretation then we would also have to agree that Islam wages a never-ending war in this world and requires its followers to partake in such an offensive war that makes it impossible for Muslims to live in peace in any part of the world. According to your interpretation, it becomes incumbent upon us to wage jihad against all the non-Muslim governments and even those Muslim states where the laws of Islam are not practiced. And if this is indeed our view and religious duty, then how is it possible for non-Muslims to regard us as their peaceful neighbours and

peacefully engage with us or for non-Muslim governments to tolerate our existence on their lands?

1. The first argument is based on a gross misunderstanding. It is one thing for a person to believe in an ideology and to follow it in his personal life, and quite another for him to establish a system of community life based upon his views and to impose it upon the residents of a nation.[1] The dissenter does not draw a line between these. He relates the ayaat, 'there is no compulsion in *deen*' and 'to you your *deen* and to me mine' to both these spheres, when actually they relate only to the former case. We would definitely not compel a non-Muslim to abandon his faith and accept Islam or prevent him from practicing his acts of worship and ask him to offer namaz and fasts instead. However, we would never allow him to forcefully impose his moral, educational, cultural, social, economic, legal and political views regarding society upon us. Allowing someone to practice his faith is indeed tolerance, but that does not mean we tolerate the imposition of others' system against our own. It goes without saying that all the laws and government policies and the entire economic system of a country would follow the ideology on which the country's government is founded, and it would be impossible for us to abide by the principles of our religion while staying in such a country.

Whether we like it or not, the followers of other religions would take advantage of their political authority and enforce their views on all aspects of our life. To show tolerance in this case would mean that if they consider extramarital sex to be legit and openly allow people to engage in it, then this evil would spread in our community

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[1] Please understand that government is nothing but force and coercion. The ideology, principles and laws that form the basis of a government would obviously be implemented on those people who live within its sphere of influence.

as well and we would be expected to tolerate it in the capacity of helpless citizens. If they consider interest to be permissible and deal with interest themselves, then even the most pious of our people would not remain untouched by the curse of interest and we would not be able to purchase even the smallest of items until we indirectly pay interest on that commodity in the form of tax. If they are atheists, then the entire educational system of the country would be based on those very views and atheist values and all doors of progress and prosperity would be closed upon its citizens except for that one door that leads to hell, and even the most devout Muslim would find it difficult to protect his progeny from the torrent of atheism. If they abolish divine law and make their own laws instead, and establish the country's culture on the foundations of these laws, then a major part of our economic, social and cultural life would be forced to part with the restrictions of the law we have faith in and instead fall in line with those laws in which we have no faith. Pray, what kind of a tolerance is this? On what premise of logic can 'there is no compulsion in *deen*' be understood to mean that we should keep tolerating whatever compulsion others place on our *deen*?

It is apparent that we need a coercive power for the smooth functioning of any civic system. Such a power is called a state. The need for such a state can be denied by none other than those who favour anarchy or who hold the communist concept that at a certain point of time, the collective conscience of the public would replace the need of a state. This, however, is just a utopian concept with no practical example to support it. Past experiences and the knowledge of human nature teach us that a coercive power is indispensible towards the establishment of society. Now, it is also obvious that every such government would have an ideological backing as well; and it is on the basis of its particular ideology that it would develop a policy and programme, which it would implement by force using its coercive powers. The nature of this coercion and the

principles and details of this policy have a huge bearing on the make and break of the fabric of any society. Not only community life, but even individual lives start getting moulded in the cast prepared by the state, whether they like it or not. Even if the residents of a state are at odds with its core ideology and the details of its policy, they *have* to surrender 90% of their personal beliefs and toe the line of the state, with hold over the remaining 10% of their beliefs also diminishing gradually.

After understanding this concept of a state and accepting that the existence of a state is nevertheless necessary to run any society, it is not at all difficult for any sane person to realize that those people who are not just believers in a 'religion' in the narrow sense of the word, but believe in a holistic system (*deen*), and if they are firm on their beliefs, unwilling to spend a life that is not in accordance with their faith, then they have no option but to step forward and try to take the reins of such a government in their own hands. If they fail to do so, then others would claim power, forcing the former people to abide by the latter's *deen* instead of their own *deen* in at least 90% of their individual and community affairs. In a civilized society, this 'compulsion' would have to be done by either of the two groups. If we don't do it then the disbelievers would do it. So instead of allowing the disbelievers to compel us in this regard and drag us towards hell, it would be far better for us to compel them and get them closer to paradise.

This is but one aspect of the matter. The other aspect is that God is the Lord of the world. Only that person is entitled to live on His earth, benefit from his blessings and to spend from His resources, who is obedient to Him and follows His laws- both innate and legislated ones. He who does not do so is an unjust usurper and a rebel. His disobedience is not only against the call of justice, but also a cause of chaos in the land and persecution of those living in it. The true requirement of justice is that such people who have rebelled against their Lord and refuse to abide by His laws should not

even be allowed to stay on earth. But this is a great favour of God and part of His immense forbearance that He not only allows them to stay on earth but even allows them to remain steadfast on their disbelief, paganism, atheism and rebellion as long as they keep it to themselves and abstain from causing strife and discord in society and becoming a trial for other servants of God. What He does not allow them to do is to abrogate His divinely legislated laws and fill the world with chaos by running it on the basis of the laws they have formulated themselves. So while He instructs the Believers not to compel the disbelievers into accepting Islam, He does command those who have faith in His laws to try and crush their reign and the '*fitna*' they have spread on earth with all their might so that the system of this world runs on the *deen* of God and those who do not believe in His *deen* might live in subservience and not exert dominance, as is alluded to in the 29th ayat of Surah atTaubah: حَتّٰى يُعْطُوا الْجِزْيَةَ عَنْ يَّدٍ وَّهُمْ صٰغِرُوْنَ "*until they pay tribute out of their hands and are utterly subdued.*"

2. After understanding these facts, the second argument is rendered futile. If Joseph (Peace be upon him) was indeed a prophet appointed by God then his mission in life could be no different than the mission of other prophets- to make God's *deen* dominate over every other *deen*. This is an established fact and a general principle that we always need to keep at the back of our mind while studying the biographies of all the prophets and the interpretations provided to explain the various events recorded therein. If we happen to agree that Prophet Joseph used to implement the law of the king in Egypt instead of God's laws, then there would remain no difference between Prophet Joseph and Sir Sikander and Fazlul Haq[1], at least in principle.

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[1] These gentlemen were the chief ministers of Punjab and Bengal when this article was penned down. Instead of them, any Muslim minister working under a non-Muslim government can also be imagined.

It is quite unfortunate that people have been misguided in this regard. Actually, they have not understood the story of Prophet Joseph at all. They assume that when Joseph told the king of Egypt, اجْعَلْنِي عَلَىٰ خَزَآئِنِ الْأَرْضِ *"Place me in charge of the treasures of the land"* (Surah Yusuf ayat 55), he was simply applying for a job which was accepted by the king, and he was appointed to the post that was held by Todarmal in Akbar's court. This, however, is far removed from the truth.

Prophet Joseph initially adopted the same method towards the establishment of deen that other prophets have adopted, viz. open call followed by the grooming and organization of those people who accept the call and then to take these men along and strive for the establishment of deen. Accordingly, he began inviting people towards Islam from the jail itself and we have one of his sermons reproduced in the Qur'an in the fifth section of Surah Yusuf. However, at one point of time, opportunity knocked and he encountered a way to expedite his mission. He noticed that the impact of his chastity (in the matter of the Aziz's wife and her friends) and that of his wisdom in interpreting the king's dream had been so profound on the king that he had become his ardent admirer. Joseph realized that if in this situation he were to ask him for the complete authority of the state, it would readily be granted to him. Hence, instead of pursuing his mission of establishing the truth by means of open calls, he deemed it more prudent to carry his mission forward by taking over the reins of governance. With this in mind, Prophet Joseph submits, اجْعَلْنِي عَلَىٰ خَزَآئِنِ الْأَرْضِ *"Place me in charge of the treasures of the land"* (Surah Yusuf ayat 55). This was not merely an application for the post of Minister of Finance, as some people misconceive. Rather, this was a demand for dictatorship, placing him in a position similar to that of

Italy's Mussolini[1], with the only difference being that the King of Italy is not an admirer of Mussolini, but is compelled by the influence of his party; whereas the King of Egypt had become an adorer of Prophet Joseph himself.[2]

God himself testifies to the authority of Prophet Joseph when He says, كَذٰلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوْسُفَ فِي الْاَرْضِ يَتَبَوَّاُ مِنْهَا حَيْثُ يَشَآءُ *"Thus did We establish Joseph in the land so that he could settle wherever he pleased."* (Surah Yusuf ayat 56). In other words, the entire country was under his control.

An additional testimony can be found in the 20th ayat of Surah Maidah, wherein Prophet Moses (Peace be upon him) tells his community, يٰقَوْمِ اذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَةَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ اِذْ جَعَلَ فِيْكُمْ اَنْۢبِيَآءَ وَجَعَلَكُمْ مُّلُوْكًا ۖ وَّاٰتٰىكُمْ مَّا لَمْ يُؤْتِ اَحَدًا مِّنَ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۝ *"My people, recall Allah's favour upon you when He raised prophets among you and appointed you rulers, and granted to you what He had not granted to anyone else in the world"*. This clearly shows that the authority Joseph had received in Egypt eventually resulted in a complete revolution, with the Israelites ruling the land and gaining a stature higher than that of their contemporary communities.

Moreover, the religious impact Prophet Joseph left in Egypt has been testified to in Surah Momin. In its 34th ayat, a believing Copt addresses the ruling Pharaoh thus: وَلَقَدْ جَآءَكُمْ يُوْسُفُ مِنْ قَبْلُ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ فَمَا زِلْتُمْ فِيْ شَكٍّ مِّمَّا جَآءَكُمْ بِهٖ ۖ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا هَلَكَ قُلْتُمْ لَنْ يَّبْعَثَ اللّٰهُ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ رَسُوْلًا *"Verily Joseph came to you with clear signs before, yet you continued to doubt his Message. Thereafter when he died, you said: God shall send no messenger after him."* This implies that they thought that 'we can never again have a man of such stature'.

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[1] Benito Mussolini was alive and reigned as the dictator of Italy when this article was first published.

[2] The renowned Qur'anic exegete, Imam Mujahid goes on to claim that the King had even pledged to Islam at the hands of Prophet Joseph [Ibn Jareer]

Who would now have the audacity to conclude that it is permissible to be a part of a non-Muslim system of governance drawing justifications from Prophet Joseph's story? Now let us take up the ayat, مَا كَانَ لِيَأْخُذَ أَخَاهُ فِي دِينِ الْمَلِكِ *"He could not have taken his brother within the law of the king"* (Surah Yusuf ayat 76), from which it is deduced that Prophet Joseph used to abide by the law of the Egyptian king. Although there are many ways in which this ayat can be interpreted, but even if we accept the oft repeated version, all that can possibly be said is that when this episode took place in the life of Prophet Joseph, Egypt continued to follow its existing criminal law (and we can easily understand from the Qur'an that this episode took place in the early years of his term. This is because no sooner had he taken charge of Egypt than the famine broke out, compelling his brothers to obtain ration from Egypt). It is obvious that the social system of a country cannot be changed overnight. This is a gradual process. Even during the age of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, it took ten years to reform the social system of Arabs. Laws of inheritance were changed in 3 or 4 AH, the new laws concerning marriage and divorce came into effect five to six years after the migration too place. Criminal laws took eight years to get amended. The economic system of the nation was changed over a course of nine years. Alcohol was completely prohibited only in 8 AH, while interest was completely abolished in 9 AH. Likewise, Prophet Joseph must also have taken many years to completely revamp the social structure and it is quite possible that during a good part of his tenure, the previous laws might have continued to be in force. How and why should this be cited to conclude that a prophet of God used to believe in and abide by the laws of ignorant people instead of following God's divine laws?

3. As for the third argument, it is more of an excuse than an argument. We have already replied to this excuse in the preceding pages. Hence, we would simply quote a

Hadith in this regard that has been recorded by Abu Dawood:

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, "And jihad should continue from the time of my appointment till the time the last group of this Ummat fights the Dajjal. Neither can the tyranny of a tyrant annul it, nor can the justice of a just person do so."

This means that neither can *jihad* be discontinued on the excuse that we are currently subdued by cruel oppressors, nor can it be excused by citing the argument that although the government is that of disbelievers, we are living in peace and are being delivered justice. Nor is it permissible for Muslims to remain satisfied at the environment of justice prevalent in their own country and pay no heed to the injustice and oppression meted out to others in the outside world.

Tarjuman ul Qur'an
Shaban-Shawwal 1361 AH/
November-December 1942 CE

Certain Queries regarding Surah Yusuf

A reader of Tarjuman ul Qur'an writes:

I would like to gain from your insight into the Qur'an concerning two aspects of Surah Yusuf:

1. Surah Yusuf tells us that God established Prophet Joseph (peace be upon him) in the land and he became part of the government in an exalted capacity. But it is obvious that he was a prophet, making it incumbent upon him to discharge his prophetic duties as well. The believing courtier from Pharaoh's court has also pointed out in his address that the people of Pharaoh had refused to believe in the prophethood of Joseph (peace be upon him) and that he continued to give them concessions till his last breath. This means that he had presented his prophethood to the people but Pharaoh and his people refused to believe in him. Despite this, Joseph continued to be a part of the establishment. The question that arises is that how could a respectable prophet of God continue to remain part of a godless establishment when he had already laid his claim to prophethood before them and they had rejected it. Prophet Joseph should either have waged jihad against such disbelievers or should have emigrated from there. However, neither did he emigrate, nor did he launch a jihad. Moreover, there is no hint that he even distanced himself from them or registered his dissent! Would you please solve this mystery?
2. The second issue concerns the prostrations that were done out of reverence. Kindly elaborate on that as well.

The pre-Mosaic history of the Children of Israel is not well documented[1]. Hence, it becomes difficult to obtain details about the hints contained in the Qur'an.

Nevertheless, the concise narration of the Qur'an does make it amply clear that the status of Prophet Joseph was not that of a member of the godless Egyptian government, but that of a person wielding absolute power. He had taken over the reins of government on the very condition that all authority would rest with him.

Please read the following ayat very carefully:

قَالَ اجْعَلْنِيْ عَلٰى خَزَآئِنِ الْاَرْضِۚ اِنِّيْ حَفِيْظٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿۵۵﴾ وَ كَذٰلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوْسُفَ
فِي الْاَرْضِۚ يَتَبَوَّاُ مِنْهَا حَيْثُ يَشَآءُ

Joseph said, "Place me in charge of the treasures of the land. I am a good keeper and know my task well". Thus did We establish Joseph in the land so that he could settle wherever he pleased.

(Surah Yusuf ayaat 55-56)

The underlined words clarify that he had demanded absolute authority and that is precisely what he got. Some people have misunderstood 'treasures of the land' to mean that the post he received was that of a Finance Minister or Revenue Officer. Rather, this alludes to the resources of the country. What Prophet Joseph had demanded was that all the resources of the Egyptian government be placed at his disposal. The resultant authority he gained brought all of Egypt under his rule. People have resorted to a very narrow interpretation of the clause, 'so that he could settle wherever he pleased' as well. In their view, all it means is that Prophet Joseph had been allowed to build houses or stay wherever he wished. What is actually intended from this clause is that Prophet Joseph exercised the same authority over Egypt as a landlord exercises over his estate.

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[1] The Bible and the Talmud are also largely silent on this aspect. The ancient history of Egypt and the archaeological data obtained so far are also lacking in this regard.

Now the question is what efforts were made by Prophet Joseph to use his authority towards reforming the social, cultural, moral and political systems, so as to confirm those to Islamic values and how successful was he in doing so. We do not come across any answer to this question in the pages of history. However, there is an ayat in Surah alMaidah that tells us that Joseph's authority in Egypt was not limited to his self or tenure. Even after him, his clan- that was Muslim- ruled over Egypt for many generations. They attained the prestige and honour that no other community on earth could boast of. The ayat is as follows:

وَاِذْ قَالَ مُوْسٰى لِقَوْمِهٖ يٰقَوْمِ اذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَةَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ اِذْ جَعَلَ فِيْكُمْ
اَنْۢبِيَآءَ وَجَعَلَكُمْ مُّلُوْكًا ۖۗ وَّاٰتٰىكُمْ مَّا لَمْ يُؤْتِ اَحَدًا مِّنَ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۝٢٠

"And remember when Moses told his community: O my people! Do recall Allah's favour upon you when He raised prophets among you and appointed you rulers, and granted you what He had not granted to anyone else in the world". *(Surah alMaidah ayat 20)*

It can be deduced from this ayat that the effect of this Islamic authority must have definitely penetrated all aspects of Egyptian life.

The ayat of Surah alMomin from which you have inferred that the Coptic community had refused to believe in Prophet Joseph has been misunderstood by you. I believe that the Egyptian society mimicked the Indian one where a small section of the country's population accepted Islam, while the vast majority adhered to paganism[1].

The section that accepted Islam remained in power for many years. However, as the years passed, their moral and ideological decline led them into the abyss of servitude and

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[1] The Bible tells us that of the people who were part of the exodus from Egypt, six lakh men were capable of warfare. This means that their total strength exceeded twenty lakh, which was at least 10% of Egyptian population.

ignorance, to the point that they fell into the trap of committing excesses and resorted to hero worship. There then remained no apparent difference between them and the other pagans. The believer among Pharaoh's courtiers summarizes this when he says:

وَلَقَدْ جَآءَكُمْ يُوسُفُ مِنْ قَبْلُ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ فَمَا زِلْتُمْ فِيْ شَكٍّ مِّمَّا جَآءَكُمْ بِهٖ ۗ حَتّٰٓى

اِذَا هَلَكَ قُلْتُمْ لَنْ يَّبْعَثَ اللّٰهُ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ رَسُوْلًا ۚ

"Verily Joseph came to you with clear signs before, yet you continued to doubt his message. Thereafter when he died, you said: God shall send no messenger after him." (Surah alMomin ayat 34)

The first underlined clause tells us that during the lifetime of Prophet Joseph, the vast majority of Egyptians doubted his prophethood. This has nevertheless been the case with almost all the prophets. The second underlined statement suggests that after his death, the people who believed in him were so overawed by his personality that they committed excesses in his regard, claiming that no messenger could come after him, precluding them from believing in the prophets that came after him. This was similar to what the Jews and Christians eventually did, despite the fact that God had never announced the end of prophethood after Joseph or Moses or Jesus (peace be upon them all).

In any case, this ayat does not convey that no one in the country believed in him. On the contrary, other signs suggest that there arose a sizable number of believers from among the natives who assisted the Children of Israel in establishing and maintaining an Islamic government in Egypt for quite some time- that gradually degenerated over the years.

Prostrations

To the best of my study, the prostration of Prophet Joseph's parents and brothers in his presence was not the

same '*sajdah*' that is part of Islamic terminology i.e. to place one's forehead, knees and hands on the floor. The '*sajdah*' referred to in Islamic terminology is actually the ultimate form of prostration that has been made exclusive for the worship of God. The literal meaning of the Arabic word '*sajdah*' is humility and acquiescence that can be displayed in some form or condition. It was a part of Israeli etiquette to bow before someone out of gratitude or respect for that person and this was termed as '*sajood*' in their language. The Old Testament states that when the angels appointed to destroy Sodom visited Prophet Abraham (Peace be upon him) in human form, Abraham welcomed them and bent towards the ground (Genesis Chapter 18 verse 2). Likewise, when Lady Sarah passed away, Abraham bowed before the Hittites as a token of gratitude because they had given him the burial ground for free (Genesis Chapter 23 verse 12). Bowing is still part of European etiquette.

Prophet Joseph had responded to his brothers' atrocities by forgiving them and being extremely gracious to them by bringing them out of the nomadic life of Canaan and settling them in Egypt with all due honour. As a mark of acknowledgment and gratitude, the brothers and their parents spontaneously bowed before him (in line with their accepted culture). This act of theirs has been alluded to in the Qur'an thus: "they bowed in prostration before him".

Tarjuman ul Qur'an

Rabiul Akhir 1363 AH/ April 1944 CE)

Prophet Joseph and Being part of a non-Islamic Government

Days after the publication of the previous article, 'Certain Queries regarding Surah Yusuf', we received a detailed critique of the same by a renowned elderly gentleman who has now passed away, who went with the title of Khan Bahadur and has held the post of Collector in UP and Deewan in an Indian state. Since our reply to his critique would not be clear to our readers unless they have gone through his letter, we reproduce relevant parts of his letter here before presenting our reply.

"The issue raised by the questioner- and the issue that is actually worth debating- is simply whether Prophet Joseph became part and member of a non-Islamic government or not. And if he did become a member, is this act of his in accordance with the Islamic creed? Maulana Maududi has said that 'the status of Prophet Joseph was not that of a member of the godless Egyptian government' and it is quite surprising that he supports his opinion by citing the very ayat of the Qur'an قَالَ اجْعَلْنِي عَلَىٰ خَزَآئِنِ الْأَرْضِ (*Joseph said, "Place me in charge of the treasures of the land"*) that conveys the exact opposite meaning. The literal meaning of this 55th ayat of Surah Yusuf has been offered by Shaikh ulHind Maulana Mahmood alHasan (May Allah have mercy upon his soul) in the following words:

"Joseph said: Appoint me over the treasures of the land. I am a guardian, knowledgeable and thus We

empowered Joseph in that land; he settled in the land wherever he wished."

Observe how Joseph (Peace be upon him) requests the King of Egypt to place him in charge of the treasures of the land. The King accepts his request and he is appointed as the officer-in-charge of the king's treasures. This obviously makes him a part or member of the government. Maulana Maududi unsuccessfully tries to escape this intuitive conclusion when he avers that 'he had demanded absolute authority and that is precisely what he got'. First of all, there is no mention of 'absolute authority' in the Qur'an; Maulana Maududi is trying to superimpose his own views on the Qur'an so that the Qur'an might confirm to his personal views instead of allowing the Qur'an to rectify his personal views. It is such mentality that the late Iqbal had referred to when he wrote: '*Khud badalte nahi, Qur'an ko badal dete haiñ*' (Instead of changing themselves, they change the Qur'an itself). But this unwarranted addition of the word 'absolute' does little to support Maulana's reasoning or views. Even if it is accepted that Prophet Joseph had requested for absolute authority over the treasures and he did indeed receive absolute authority, this authority was after all requested from the King of Egypt and it was the King of Egypt who gave him this authority. Hence, despite this absolute authority, the status of Prophet Joseph does not go beyond that of a part and member of the ruling government.

Similarly removed from fact is Maulana's statement that 'What Prophet Joseph had demanded was that all the resources of the Egyptian government be placed at his disposal. The resultant authority he gained brought all of Egypt under his rule'. Even if it is assumed that Prophet Joseph had asked for absolute authority over the treasures, and they were granted to him, it should be noted that there are many other departments in a government other than finance like police, military, judiciary etc. Neither had Joseph requested for any of these, nor were they granted to

him. This makes Maulana Maududi's claim that 'The resultant authority he gained brought all of Egypt under his rule' completely baseless.

The status of Prophet Joseph remains that of a part and member of the ruling government despite gaining authority over its treasures until it is proved from some source that the King of Egypt had abdicated in his favour. This can neither be proved from history, nor from the Qur'an. Instead, the Qur'an explicitly rejects this idea. The ayat preceding the ayat under discussion reads:

وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ ائْتُونِي بِهِ أَسْتَخْلِصْهُ لِنَفْسِي ۖ فَلَمَّا كَلَّمَهُ قَالَ إِنَّكَ الْيَوْمَ لَدَيْنَا مَكِينٌ أَمِينٌ ﴿٥٤﴾

The King said: "Bring him to me. I will select him exclusively for my service." So when Joseph spoke to him the King said: "You are now one of established position, fully trusted by us." *(Surah Yusuf ayat 54)*

It is amply evident from this ayat that the King of Egypt made Joseph a distinguished and trustworthy part of his sultanate and appointed him as his personal advisor. There is not even a remote hint in this ayat that the King had abdicated from his position or relinquished his powers. Moreover, there is conclusive proof in a following ayat that the rule of the King of Egypt continued even years after Joseph was appointed over the treasures of the land and the *deen* of the King was being executed at that time as well. When Joseph's brothers came to Egypt for the second time to replenish their ration, and upon the insistence of Joseph they got his true brother Benjamin along with them, Joseph kept his brother with him and even revealed to him that he was his brother. However, he did not reveal his identity in front of his step brothers. Since Joseph wished to keep Benjamin with him, he came up with a strategy that when the baggage of the brothers was being prepared, a goblet was surreptitiously placed in Benjamin's baggage and when the caravan was getting ready to leave a caller cried

out that 'O people of the caravan, indeed you are thieves'. When Joseph's brothers pleaded innocence, the caller asked them what should be their punishment if they are proved to be liars. The brothers replied that the punishment is that 'He in whose saddlebag the cup is found, he himself shall be its recompense. This is how we punish the guilty'. Their saddlebags were searched and the goblet was recovered from Benjamin's saddlebag. Accordingly, Benjamin was held back. Here, God says, مَا كَانَ لِيَأْخُذَ اَخَاهُ فِيْ دِيْنِ الْمَلِكِ اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّشَآءَ اللّٰهُ *"He (Joseph) could not have taken his brother in the deen of the King, except that God willed."* (Surah Yusuf ayat 76)

The quoted ayat, read along with the context, clearly shows that it was the imperial law that was being executed in Egypt at that time, and as per that law Joseph could not have taken his brother Benjamin away from his brothers on the charge of theft. But God Almighty Himself made the brothers utter out that the punishment of theft is that he in whose baggage the cup is found shall be taken as its recompense. The interpretation of this ayat that has been provided by Maulana Shabbir Ahmad Usmani is that: *'This means that the brothers themselves blurted out that enslave the person in whose baggage you find your cup. He was caught because of this, although there was no such provision in Egyptian law. Had this strategy not been adopted, by which they were entrapped in their own words, there was no way Benjamin could have been kept back as per the law of the country."*

This does not necessarily mean that Prophet Joseph did not continue preaching Islam after being appointed minister in the government, or that he shied away from announcing his prophethood. On the contrary, Joseph had begun preaching monotheism when he was in jail. He explains to his co-inmates:

يٰصَاحِبَيِ السِّجْنِ ءَاَرْبَابٌ مُّتَفَرِّقُوْنَ خَيْرٌ اَمِ اللّٰهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ ﴿٣٩﴾ مَا تَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖٓ اِلَّآ اَسْمَآءً سَمَّيْتُمُوْهَآ اَنْتُمْ وَاٰبَآؤُكُمْ مَّآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطٰنٍ ۭ اِنِ الْحُكْمُ اِلَّا لِلّٰهِ ۭ اَمَرَ اَلَّا تَعْبُدُوْٓا اِلَّآ اِيَّاهُ

"O fellow prisoners! Is it better that there be diverse lords, or just Allah, the One, the Irresistible? Those whom you serve beside Him are merely idle names that you and your fathers have fabricated, without Allah sending down any sanction for them. All authority to govern rests only with Allah. He has commanded that you serve none but Him." (Surah Yusuf ayaat 39-40)

Similarly, Prophet Joseph must have surely continued with his preaching even after being appointed minister.

However, what is absolutely clear from these ayaat is that Joseph (Peace be upon him) became the member of a non-Islamic government of his own volition and request; and that non-Islamic governance and non-Islamic laws continued even after him becoming minister of this government. Moreover, we note that instead of God castigating him for his act, He is, on the contrary, appreciative of him when He refers to Joseph's establishment in the land as a divine reward. God says, وَكَذٰلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوْسُفَ فِي الْاَرْضِ ۚ يَتَبَوَّاُ مِنْهَا حَيْثُ يَشَآءُ *"Thus did We establish Joseph in the land so that he could settle wherever he pleased."* (Surah Yusuf ayat 56), by which we gather that it is permissible for not only ordinary Muslims but even for prophets to become a part of a non-Islamic government; and not only permissible, but in certain cases it is also obligatory for at least one person from the Muslim community to do so. When Prophet Joseph himself sought authority over the treasures of the land, it is but evident that he not only considered it permissible for himself but also considered it to be an obligation upon himself to do so. Had this not been the case, he would never have made such a request before the King, nor would he have told him that he was knowledgeable and could guard well. I say this

because if he would not have considered the ministry obligatory on himself, his claim of being knowledgeable and a good guardian would be seen as an attempt to blow his own trumpet. The footnote Maulana Shabbir Ahmad Usmani has written while discussing this ayat confirms to my observation to a great extent. He writes:

> *"This means that I shall guard the treasures and I am fully acquainted with the ledgers and accounts to be maintained. Joseph himself sought the post and assumed responsibility of the treasury in order to benefit mankind, look into the welfare of the public in an organized manner and maintain the financial strength of the kingdom especially during the dreadful famine. This shows that it is not against the dignity of prophethood to get into financial affairs out of empathy for the populace. Moreover, if a person harbouring good intentions feels that he is qualified for a certain post and others might not be able to fulfil its responsibilities as effectively, then in order to benefit Muslims he may desire or apply for that post; and if he is required to mention some of his special qualities, it would not be counted as blowing one's own trumpet, which would otherwise have been an impermissible thing to do."*

Maulana Usmani's explanation must have made it clear to the readers that Prophet Joseph had himself applied for the post and assumed responsibility of the treasury. He had not become an absolute authoritarian or a sovereign. Abdul Ghaffar Chandwadi has written an article in Lahore's 'Musalman' (dated 13th January 1942) in which he says that, *"In the opinion of Maulana Shah Abdul Aziz it is permissible to work as an employee of the British police and judiciary. Maulana Abdul Hayy Firangi Mahali has also ruled it permissible provided there is no injustice or sin involved in it. In certain cases where it is required, he has even declared it to be an objective of Islam."*

Of the recent Islamic scholars, the Wise Sage of the community, Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi (May Allah have mercy on his soul) has universally been acknowledged as a distinguished jurist, surpassing all other scholars in stature. Being an employee in the present administration was not impermissible in his view as well, what with some of his own prominent disciples like Maulana Khwaja Azizul Hasan being government employees.

Even Jamiatul Ulema Hind, which is the largest Indian organization of authentic and certified Islamic scholars, does not seem to hold it impermissible to be a part of the current government; many Muslims became members of the previous Congress government with the knowledge and permission of this distinguished body of Islamic scholars. Hence, it is apparent that the view shared by the majority of Islamic scholars is that it is not impermissible to be a member of a non-Islamic system or to be a part of its government structure. The fact that Prophet Joseph opted to be a member of the Egyptian government and became a part of its administration, despite the fact that that government was not an Islamic one, can act as a favourable argument and citation for us. Also, the unanimous opinion of Maulana Shah Abdul Aziz, Maulana Abdul Hayy Firangi Mahali and the Jamiatul Ulema Hind is worth being followed by us. Hence, all those rulings of Maulana Maududi and other Islamic organizations that seek to prevent Muslims from serving under the present government under any capacity and declare the income obtained from such sources to be *haram* (illegitimate) deserve to be discarded and relegated to the dust bin. In contrast, we learn from the example and actions of Prophet Joseph that it is not only permissible for us Muslims to become members of the current government, but it is obligatory upon us to do so as representatives of the Muslim community."

(After this, Khan Bahadur sahab has presented some logical arguments as well, and has also derived from the

migration to Abyssinia. But we are omitting those here for the sake of brevity.)

Reply:

We are extremely grateful to Khan Bahadur *sahab* for having raised this issue and granted us an opportunity to clarify our stand yet again. We are spending our time on this debate with the sole intention of providing many a seeker of truth with replies to most of the misleading arguments that are dished out to permit one's obedience to authorities other than God, or in other words, surrender of one's will before an authority other than God, and to allow people to become slaves of a non-Muslim disposition to the point of declaring it to be an obligation on a representative segment of Muslims.

We have already discussed this aspect of Prophet Joseph's story in two of our previous articles. The first discussion was more detailed and comprehensive, while the other was brief and concise. We fail to understand why Khan Bahadur should have ignored the former and chosen the latter to base his objections on. He would have found the answers to most or all of his objections in our first discussion.[1] Nevertheless, whatever be the reason behind this, we have found it to be a blessing in disguise. It was getting difficult for us to explain the same thing over and over again, but now that someone else has asked for it we'd use it as an opportunity to clarify the matter.

Of all the things that can be expected from a reasonable person, the most important is that there should not be any contradiction in his speech. Even an uneducated simpleton is quick to point it out when he hears a man speak words that contradict themselves, the absurdity of mutually contradictory statements being beyond the tolerance of his crude mind as well. How astonishing is it then to expect such a thing from God, who is Himself the

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[1] Please refer to the chapter, The Un-Islamic Idea of Tolerance.

Creator of intellect and the Source of all wisdom! What is much more bewildering is the fact that those who expect such irrationalities from God are not a bunch of uneducated ignorant folk, but those intellectuals who lecture the world on knowledge and rational thinking and those distinguished men who very effectively use their brains to run worldly matters. It is these illuminated gentlemen who want and expect God to speak in contradictory terms. In effect, He should claim to be the Sovereign of the heavens and the earth, and at the same time recognize and accept the sovereignty of someone else on His land. He demands that people obey His commands, and also allows people to- even makes it obligatory upon them- to obey those kings who almost always issue commands in complete repudiation to His Own commands without any authority from Him whatsoever. He legislates laws for people and announces that these alone are My laws and everything other than this is false, while permitting the execution of other laws as well, and entitles the same people for whom He had legislated those laws to either make their own laws or follow the laws of someone else. He appoints his messengers with the exclusive task of calling the inhabitants of the world to accept His *deen,* and at the same time allows (and to paraphrase Khan Bahadur- even appreciates) some or all of his messengers to become active members of a *deen* other than His and put in all their resources to serve such a government to ensure its success. He sifts through all the people of the world to create a special community so that it might enjoin upon others what He deems virtuous and to forbid what He deems evil, and then allows people of this community- rather make it obligatory upon the distinguished among them- to help establish and perpetuate those evils that His rebels and deflectors have declared virtuous and act as tools to forbid and abolish those virtues that have been declared evil by His dissenters.

These statements represent such a vivid paradox that the contradictions therein do not require a deep study to understand. It is surprising to note, then, that those scholars who write exegeses of the Qur'an and are qualified enough to deliver lectures on juristic issues and those men who are so capable that they are posted as collectors and *dewans* fail to see any contradiction in these statements. Or else, the opinion they hold about God Almighty is so shallow that they consider Him to be worse than that uneducated simpleton who cannot tolerate the absurdity of contradictory statements.

At one place, Khan Bahadur writes:

"Moreover, there is conclusive proof in a following ayat that the rule of the King of Egypt continued even years after Joseph was appointed over the treasures of the land and the deen of the King was being executed at that time as well... God says, مَا كَانَ لِيَأْخُذَ أَخَاهُ فِي دِينِ الْمَلِكِ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ *"He (Joseph) could not have taken his brother in the deen of the King, except that God willed." (Surah Yusuf ayat 76)*

The quoted ayat, read along with the context, clearly shows that it was the imperial law that was being executed in Egypt at that time."

While writing these words, the writer was so engrossed in trying to prove his point that he perhaps could not find the time to notice the contradiction that his interpretation was having with the Qur'an. We request him to notice it now that we have pointed it out. In the ayat he has quoted, God has Himself called the imperial law of Egypt '*deen alMalik*' (*deen* of the King). This clearly shows that *deen* does not refer only to the rites and rituals of worship that are carried out in temples and chapels. Rather, it refers to the law under which the police arrests criminals, under which the judiciary passes judgments on civil and criminal cases, under which the state government is run and which forms the basis of the country's culture and civilization.

The Qur'an refers to the system governing all these departments as '*deen*'. In Egypt, since that system was derived from the King's wishes and depended upon his supreme authority, the Qur'an refers to it as the *deen* of the King. From this analogy, we also come to know that '*deen Allah*' does not only refer to an entity that is limited to the masjid, prayers and fasting; what it actually refers to is the adherence to the entire divine law which is derived from the will of God and is dependent upon His rule and encompasses within its meaning all the aspects of collective life. Now the question is on what task was Joseph (Peace be upon him) appointed as a prophet- to invite people towards the *deen of God* or to promote the *deen of the King*? If the interpretation of Khan Bahadur and the exegeses of those stalwarts whose name he is quoting to overwhelm us is to be believed, then it would necessarily follow that on the one hand God appointed His prophet to invite His creation (especially those people who lived in Egypt) to accept the *deen of God* and on the other hand the same prophet served towards the establishment of the *deen of the King* under the express guidance and supervision of God. What is more astonishing is that far from realizing the inherent paradox of this contradictory act, God (according to Khan Bahadur) actually praised and appreciated this act of His prophet and referred to the appointment of His prophet to the post of a minister in a godless system as a 'reward from God'. This is like equating God (God forbid!) to the pious elders of our community who keep prostrating on prayer-mats with dark marks on their foreheads, but when their sons pass MA and begin to act like Englishmen and are appointed as irrigation inspectors, then the same elders who are piety-personified offer their gratitude to God for having favoured their family with His reward.

Further, Khan Bahadur writes:

"This does not necessarily mean that Prophet Joseph did not continue preaching Islam after being appointed minister in the government, or that he shied away from

announcing his prophethood. On the contrary, Joseph had begun preaching monotheism when he was in jail... However, what is absolutely clear from these ayaat is that Joseph (Peace be upon him) became the member of a non-Islamic government of his own volition and request; and that non-Islamic governance and non-Islamic laws continued even after him becoming minister of this government."

We see a clear contradiction here as well, which the writer has ignored while being absorbed in trying to substantiate his argument. What sort of monotheism had Prophet Joseph preached? If this 'monotheism' meant that the rites of worship performed in temples and the obedience to those laws that govern a society and upon which is based the administration of a country ought to be for the One True God alone, which in other words means that our entire life becomes subservient to the *deen of God*, then the interpretation adopted by Khan Bahadur entails that Joseph acted against his own preaching by applying for the government job. And if his preaching suggested that the *deen of God* should be followed in the temple and the entire administration of the society and the country may continue as per the *deen of the King*, then it is but obvious that he was not preaching monotheism but ditheism and bipartisanship.

Moreover, the question that arises is that in what sense did Prophet Joseph announce his prophethood? If he had indeed told all the people, including the King, that he was the envoy of the Owner of the heavens and the earth and that they should thereby fear God and obey him, just like all other prophets have been saying: فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَطِيْعُوْنِ *"So fear Allah and obey me"* (Surah Shu'ara ayat 108), then he could never have acknowledged the lordship of the King and out of his obedience served a non-Islamic administration instead of an Islamic one. It would have been a striking contradiction had he said that, 'O People! Although I *am* the envoy of the Ruler of the heavens and the earth, the

way I have adopted is that I would obey the King and I call upon you to obey the King as well'. Such a contradictory statement would have been met with ridicule instead of being taken seriously and the person making such a statement would have been sent to a mental asylum instead of being conferred a ministry. Furthermore, we would find it extremely difficult to believe in a book that itself lays down the rule that God has sent messengers so that they might be obeyed as per His will: وَمَآ أَرْسَلْنَا مِن رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا لِيُطَاعَ بِإِذْنِ ٱللَّهِ *"We never sent a messenger but that he should be obeyed by the leave of Allah"* (Surah anNisa' ayat 64) and yet speaks of a messenger who spent his term, not as one who commanded obedience from the people, but as an obedient servant of a godless administration, and who even kept calling upon other people to obey the same godless administration instead of 'obeying him by the leave of God'. As an explicit proof of it being authored by God, the Qur'an itself presents the benchmark that: لَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِندِ غَيْرِ ٱللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا۟ فِيهِ ٱخْتِلَٰفًا كَثِيرًا *"Had it been from any other than Allah, they would surely have found in it much inconsistency"* (Surah anNisa' ayat 82). However, if we were to accept the interpretations presented by Khan Bahadur and his co-ideologues, then we would find such glaring inconsistencies in the Qur'anic narrative that it would fail to meet its own benchmark, which would mean that it has been authored by someone other than Allah... and this 'other' would nonetheless have to be a person of compromised intelligence!

What is actually the case is that the line of thinking that is being adopted by Khan Bahadur is the result of a long and turbulent history of moral decline and deprivation.

When Muslims plunged themselves into material pursuits, forgetting their actual purpose and abandoning their true mission, and when the only concept of '*deen*' that remained with them was that of adhering to certain rites of worship and social customs- completely oblivious and

uninterested in questions pertaining to the purpose of their lives vis-a-vis that of materialistic people- whether the reins of authority are lying with the righteous or the corrupt and whether the central leadership is Islamic or un-Islamic in its principles and goals- then God punished their negligence by causing large swathes of their territories to fall one by one under the rule of disbelievers. However, instead of recognizing this as a punishment and amending the very factors that led to this punishment, they and their scholars started deliberating on how one can lead an 'Islamic life' under a non-Islamic government. Accordingly, taking recourse to the allowance of doing an otherwise forbidden act on account of being 'coerced by necessity', they came up with a new recipe of an Islamic life- one that could be easily led in a non-Muslim state.

This led to a cascade of even more divine punishments to test them whether they come to realize their mistake and repent or sink further in the quagmire of their ignorance. So what began as a temporary and transitory 'helplessness' progressed according to divine principles and took the form of a permanent, endless, rather ever-expanding allowance. Every new 'helplessness' sought to narrow down the boundaries that were devised with regard to following Islam within and under a pagan system. However, none of these divine punishments were able to open up the eyes of Muslims and they convinced themselves that it was indeed the requirement of every such compulsion and constraint that they keep limiting the periphery of Islamic life and keep expanding the limits of pagan dominance.

Over a period of time, even the concept of 'helplessness' began to disturb them. This is because helplessness and constraint nevertheless do involve a sense of impermissibility. No sane person would deny the fact that if you are compelled to eat pork out of helplessness, you would definitely consider pork to be a prohibited entity; and when you consider it prohibited and still eat it because of your helplessness, it inevitably follows that you

would harbour a deep hatred and disgust towards it. It would be impossible for you to relish it, enjoy it and eat to your full or consider making delicious dishes out of it. A similar hatred and disgust necessarily entails all those things which you consider prohibited per se, but permit them upon yourself only out of some temporary compulsion for which you are helpless. However, it is practically impossible for an entire community to continue in a state in which it is completely and perpetually helpless with regards all the aspects dealing with its cultural, economic and political life, and whereby it harbours a consistent sense of animosity and repugnance towards the current dispensation, maintaining only as much relations with them that are indispensible for its existence. Such a state can hardly be tolerated for long. It is not long before people get tired of it. Accordingly, the Muslims too got tired of it. However, the religious decline that was under way since ages precluded these tired Muslims from concentrating on amending the past theories that they had formulated regarding the concept of an 'Islamic life under a non-Muslim government' and plan out ways and means to end this state of helplessness that had compelled them to get besieged by forbidden entities in every aspect of their lives and forced them into committing all sorts of profanities. On the contrary, the wave of religious decline that had hit those Muslims made them forego the excuse of 'helplessness' altogether, so that all those barriers of prohibition that had prevented them from obtaining progress and luxuries in the pagan administration could be pulled down and replaced by wide open gates of permissibility and acceptance.

To achieve this purpose, the word '*deen*' was redefined. As per the new concept, *deen* was related only to beliefs and acts of worship and some social customs like marriage and divorce. The purpose of Islam was thought to have been met if any government recognizes and permits these matters. Once this is done, '*Darul Kufr*' (Land of

Disbelief) becomes '*Darul Islam*' (Land of Islam) and it becomes incumbent upon all Muslims to pledge their loyalty and obedience to it. Under this administration, all social issues (which, according to the new concept, were declared to be worldly issues as opposed to those dealing with *deen*) would be subject to those laws that would be legislated in line with pagan principles. Moreover, there was now no hesitance left in operating its judicial and administrative machinery or even sacrificing one's life in its defence and expansion.

However, this matter did not stop at 'lack of hesitance' or 'permissibility'. The needs of Muslims in the pagan land soon compelled them to encourage its new generation to serve the pagan administration in order to overcome the losses they had suffered in the initial days owing to this 'hesitance'. Hence, they came up with yet another argument that the progress and development of Muslims- and in certain circumstances, even their existence- could be expected only if they wholeheartedly participate and contribute in the pagan government's judicial, legislative, administrative, military, industrial and all other such departments, failing which the Muslim community would cease to exist or in the very least would lag behind non-Muslims in the race to development. In a single stroke, this argument made 'obligatory' what was till yesterday merely 'permissible'. It thus became incumbent upon Muslims that if not all, at least a representative group of them should always come forward to meet this obligation. It was as if the 122nd ayat of Surah atTaubah was re-written as: فَلَوْلَا نَفَرَ مِنْ كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ طَآئِفَةٌ لِّيَتَفَقَّهُوْا فِي الْكُفْرِ وَلِيضلّوا قَوْمَهُمْ إِذَا رَجَعُوْٓا إِلَيْهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَضلّون '*Why did a group not separate from every division to obtain understanding of disbelief and misguide their people when they return to them that they might turn astray*' and the 104th ayat of Surah Aal-e-Imran was being rephrased as: وَلْتَكُنْ مِّنْكُمْ اُمَّةٌ يَّدْعُوْنَ إِلَى الشرّ وَيَأْمُرُوْنَ بالمنكر وينهون عن المعروف '*And let there*

arise from you a nation inviting to all that is evil, enjoining what is wrong and forbidding what is right'!

It was indeed this catastrophic alteration in *deen* that led many pious and religious people to serve as lawyers and judges while chanting the name of God on their rosaries. This allowed them to seek and deliver verdicts based on a law in which they did not believe and continue to recite the clauses of the law in which they did believe only in the comfort of their drawing rooms. It was a result of this very alteration that the children of many a righteous person began attending modern educational institutes, from which they learnt lessons in atheism, materialism and immorality and proceeded to serve the same pagan administration- not only physically, but in most cases with all their heart and soul- that was initially only forced upon them owing to the negligence and weaknesses of their forefathers. After inflicting Muslim men, this alteration infected Muslim women with the deluge of its ignorance, blasphemy and immorality. The same 'obligation by representation' that the men had taken up was now being imposed on women as well, compelling even those poor souls to serve the cause of this *deen*, lest the non-Muslims outrun them in this race as well![1]

This alteration in *deen* is not a new thing. Its foundations were laid centuries back when the pagan Tatars overpowered the Muslims. Not only that the first blueprint of an 'Islamic life under a pagan government' was prepared by the religious scholars of that time, but many scholars and righteous men had themselves adopted servitude of the pagan administration. A majority of these scholars are those whose books form part of the syllabus of our religious schools which churn out the next generation of

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[1] This matter has deteriorated further post-1950. Now, the only means to the existence of the community is that the daughters of respectable men take part in field military drills and Muslim girls visit Western countries to get trained as nurses, and that Muslims are represented in pagan countries not only be their men, but by their ladies as well.

religious scholars (Ulema) and jurists (Mufti). This has caused this mistake to assume epic proportions, and it is not at all surprising if our contemporary jurists and scholars and interpreters of the Qur'an and Hadith seem to have fallen prey to it. However, it is but obvious that an error and falsehood cannot stand vindicated just because it has been practiced since ages or that those who have committed it have been men of great stature. The only criteria to ascertain the truth can be the Book of God and the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ.

During this entire history of decay (which owes its beginning to the concept of 'Islam under the shade of paganism' on the basis of constraint and helplessness, and which gradually progressed to the declaration of 'serving the pagan administration as permissible, then commendable, then obligatory on part of the community', and which eventually fell into the abyss of the extremely despicable point of view that 'loyalty to those governments that offer religious freedom is the very requirement of *deen*'), Muslims have always tried to make sure that in order to descend further down from their previous stage of decline, they were able to derive excuses and allowances from none other than the *deen* of God. Apparently, it does seem that this approach was based on the formula that 'since the *deen* of God vouches to solve all our issues, we should be able to seek guidelines to meet the requirements at hand from the same *deen*'. However, the actual formula that was hidden behind this apparent formula was that 'When the fact remains that we have conferred a favour upon this deen by acknowledging our faith towards it, then the least we can expect from it in return is that it should follow us instead of leading us. Our relation with it should no longer be that we strive to establish it upon ourselves or upon the world, and it takes it upon itself to provide us with all those requirements that we might encounter in this struggle. Rather, the nature of this relation should now be that we abandon the struggle to establish it or even think

about it, and it should escort us to each of those avenues where we might wander to satisfy our lusts and desires and accept the servitude of all those false systems that we have preferred to enslave ourselves with, and that it should take it upon itself to provide us with all those requirements that we might encounter in leading a lifestyle that goes against its explicit edicts'. Adopting this erroneous point of view, they began searching for guidelines from within the Qur'an and the Sunnah. As a result, what appealed to them from the Qur'an was neither Surah alAnkaboot nor alBaqarah, nor Aal-e-Imran, nor alAnfal, nor atTaubah, but Surah Yusuf of all the Surahs. And mind you, only those ayaat of Surah Yusuf that have been quoted by Khan Bahadur. Similarly, from the entire life of the Prophet ﷺ, what they could amass was neither the scorching sands of Makkah, nor the stone pelting of Taif, nor the battlefields of Badr and Uhud, but the episode of the Muslims' migration to Abyssinia and their temporary residence there under the rule of a Christian king!

For a sincere student of truth, the question of whether the ayaat of Surah Yusuf quoted thus and the episode of the migration to Abyssinia indeed lead to the same conclusion that these people stress upon holds significant importance. For, if it is accepted that they do lead to the same conclusion (i.e. under divine guidance, a prophet served a pagan administration and accepted the responsibility of establishing and executing pagan laws [*deen* of the King] for the sole reason that this was his very intended purpose, and that Muslims emigrated to Abyssinia on the very basis that a non-Muslim civilization and political system could be an appropriate place of residence for them, provided it allows them to offer their prayers in their masjid and harbour certain beliefs in their heart and to chant them), then certain other question would follow which are more crucial and fundamental than the question mentioned above. These questions are:

1. Was the *deen* that was conveyed to mankind through the respectable prophets only meant for places of worship or for all walks of life?
2. And did all the prophets who had brought this *deen* have the same purpose and mission or did they have varying and even conflicting purposes and missions?
3. And exactly what is it that God wants from man? Does He want man to obey and serve Him in all walks of life and abide by the divine law or simply worship Him while executing all his other matters in a way that suits him?

One possible reply is that the *deen* sent by God is related only to those confined premises of life that are referred to as 'religious' in today's parlance. However, once this is accepted, all the injunctions that the Qur'an and other divinely revealed books offer with regards culture, society, economy, politics, civil and criminal law, judicial principles and issues related to treaties and warfare are rendered absolutely meaningless. At the most, they would not be then considered as injunctions, but merely pieces of advice and recommendation which may or may not be put into practice, inviting no divine wrath if left unheeded.

Similarly, the reply to the second question can be that different prophets had come with different missions, this being the widely held view regarding prophethood in our times. It would then have to be believed that their missions were so different from each other that while the mission of one prophet was to fight and dissemble the pagan system and establish the authority of the Islamic system in its stead, the mission of another prophet- in complete contrast- was not only to remain satisfied at some limited religious and moral reformation in a pagan establishment but to spend his life as a loyal and obedient citizen of such an establishment and even offer his services to perpetuate and promote this system if given an opportunity to do so. However, this idea neither concurs with the Qur'an, which

emphasises that the mission of all prophets was one and the same, nor does it seem plausible that God would issue such mutually contradicting and contrasting commands. There would perhaps not be a single sane person who would accept Him as God if He were to send his messengers to mankind with contradictory messages. It is another matter altogether that one messenger might be able to completely accomplish his mission of establishing the Islamic system while another might spend all his life and reach its initial or middle stages, and yet another might adopt a suitable method as per his circumstances that would neither be based on oral propagation nor would he require the sword to proceed with his mission. Despite their difference in approach and form, the mission of all those messengers was essentially the same- to strive and completely establish the system of life as ordained by God in this world. Having said that, to claim that these variations in approach and form suggest that their missions were also at variance with each other is the worst form of slander against God that one can come up with.

On the same lines, the third question can be answered by paraphrasing what the majority of today's Muslims have to say- that all that God desires from human beings is that they worship Him and abide by a few matters related to ritual purification and certain issues regarding permitted and prohibited entities. Neither does God want anything beyond this, nor is He interested in whether man follows his own laws or the commands of the satans from within Jinn and humans in all the other aspects of his life. This reply might be very soothing to the materialistic people of today's world, allowing them to conveniently interpret 'There is ease in *deen*' and 'He has not laid upon you any hardship in *deen*' to derive concessions for themselves. Nevertheless, this idea is a complete antithesis of *abdiyat* and *bandagi* (servitude and slavery). There could perhaps be no interpretation of servitude more ridiculous than that a person remains a slave for only two hours in a day and

remains independent for the remaining twenty two hours; or that his servitude is limited to saluting the master, while he is free to live his life as per his will or the will of another person. In that case, such an entity does not deserve to be called God who on one hand calls Himself the Lord and Creator of all human beings and on the other hand remains content at exercising His Lordship over an extremely minor and insignificant part of man's life and limiting man's servitude to a narrow sphere of influence. No father remains content at limiting his paternal influence over his children, no husband limits his position over his wife and no king remains content at limiting his monarchical authority over his subjects to the fulfilment of certain rites of obedience and loyalty, after which the child is allowed to call whoever he wants his father, the wife is allowed to comfort any man she deems suitable or the subjects are free to follow the laws of anyone they please, pay taxes to whoever they want and obey any authority that they wish. How can it then be expected that God, Who is the Lord and Creator of all human beings and to Whom mankind owes its existence would restrict His Lordship over them, and that upon accepting certain apparent rites and rituals of servitude would be pleased in allowing them to exercise authority over themselves or bow before the authority of someone else?

If these ideas of *deen* and prophethood and the requirements of servitude are not correct, if indeed the *deen* God has sent us is related to all the individual and collective aspects of man's life, if God expects man to completely abide by His laws and obey his guidelines and if God had sent His messengers with the sole purpose of inviting people to establish the true way of life and to strive to establish the system that is based on obedience to God alone, then it would become very difficult for a sane person to accept that of all the prophets, Prophet Joseph (Peace be upon him) was exceptionally unique in the sense that he had been vested with the task of serving as a finance

minister under the King's government instead of striving to establish the *deen* of God. In the same way, no sane person can come to terms with the contradiction that while on the one hand Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was engaged in the establishment of God's *deen* in Arab and pagan society, he on the other hand considered the non-Islamic system of Abyssinia appropriate enough to be the place of residence of a Muslim group. Those who fail to see *deen* as a rational and balanced ideological system, imagining it instead to be a collection of independent and mutually unrelated fragments find it very easy to treat the life-accounts of prophets, the teaching of the Qur'an and the commandments and injunctions of *deen* as a disjoined set and then come up with such interpretations and exegeses that have certain aspects and parts that are at complete variance with each other and contradict each other. On the contrary, those who see this *deen* as a systematic, harmonious and balanced system made by a Wise God have no option but to adopt the same interpretation and understanding for all its aspects and composite parts that concurs with the entire system as a whole, and reject all such interpretations and exegeses that imply contradictions in this *deen* or suggest inconsistencies between its teachings and the actions of its prophets- irrespective of how great a scholar presents such an interpretation.

Having said that, let us now discuss those aspects of Surah Yusuf and the migration to Abyssinia in some detail....

When we ponder over the narration of Prophet Joseph's story in Surah Yusuf, we come to know that before being appointed as a prophet, he had become a slave of the Aziz of Egypt because of the betrayal of his brothers and the malpractice of a trade caravan. He was granted the office of prophethood during this period of servitude or during his stay in prison. He was most probably honoured with this office during his stay in prison, and I say this because the words he speaks before going to prison seem to

belong more to a righteous man than a prophet. As soon as he is so appointed, he begins with his prophetic duties and invites his co-inmates towards the truth he was entrusted with. This sermon has been reproduced in the fifth passage of Surah Yusuf, a study of which clearly shows that his call was not towards the servitude of 'diverse lords' but towards the service of a Single Lord. He repeatedly makes it known to the Egyptians that the king you people have taken as your lord is not my lord; rather, my Lord is God alone and I have adopted the way of my forefathers who never associated anything with God in His divinity. While he was busy preaching his message in the prison, it so happened that the King of Egypt got so impressed by his honesty, piety, wisdom and foresightedness that he realized that the King would probably invest him with all state authority if he would request him to do so. Joseph was now standing at a crossroads. One way was to strive for an Islamic revolution by adopting the slow process of public calls, struggle, altercations and eventual war. The other way was to harness this God-gifted opportunity and gather all the authority that the King was granting him to work towards the reformation of the ideology, morals, societal norms and political structure of the entire country. The insight and foresightedness that God had granted him prompted him to prefer the second way over the first to meet his goals and accomplish his mission.

This was not a government service that was taken up in a pagan administration to earn a living or to attain personal gains or to assist the godless government in any way. Rather, this was a plan that had been adopted to meet the same mission that all the messengers of God were entrusted with, Prophet Joseph included. The status of Prophet Joseph seems to be no more than that of an ordinary paid civil servant in the eyes of those people who think that it was a mere government service that Prophet Joseph had sought in order to perpetuate the pagan system in the capacity of a finance minister, instead of using it as a tool

towards the establishment of an Islamic system. Why, his status seems to be even below than that of our country's present Congress ministers. Even the most inferior of their members had no aspirations of a ministerial post until they came to believe that such a post could help them in achieving their goal (of the nation's independence); and when they eventually did accept ministries, they summarily resigned from the posts as soon as it became clear to them that the Substance of Power had not been transferred to them.

It is of least importance whether the King was requested for this authority or it was snatched away from him, nor is it of any significance whether the King abdicated his throne as soon as Joseph was appointed or he continued to bear the crown. The question that is really important is whether Joseph had sought the post to run the pagan administration and to serve it, or to accomplish his mission of establishing an Islamic system in the land. The second thing that needs to be asked is whether or not he had actually received such authority that would have allowed him to make amendments in the country's system. In our view, the entire concept of *deen* and prophethood demands that we understand the purpose of Prophet Joseph's statement, اجْعَلْنِيْ عَلٰى خَزَآئِنِ الْاَرْضِ *'Place me in charge of the treasures of the land'* that is mentioned in the 55th ayat of Surah Yusuf, to be towards the establishment of the Islamic system and that by demanding the treasures of the land, what Prophet Joseph actually intended was that all the resources of the land be handed over to him. Khan Bahadur is unnecessarily insisting that this refers to finance. The Qur'an never uses this word '*khazain*' to refer to finance. A study of the Qur'an makes it clear that this word is used here in the same sense as 'resources'[1]; and it is but obvious

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[1] وَلِلّٰهِ خَزَآئِنُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ *'The treasures of the heavens and the earth belong to Allah'* (Surah alMunafiqoon ayat 7), وَاِنْ مِّنْ شَیْءٍ اِلَّا عِنْدَنَا خَزَآئِنُهٗ *'There is nothing except that its treasuries are with Us'* (Surah alHijr

that if a person is handed over the entire resources of a country, he gains authority over every inch of that country.

The Bible also testifies to this, where it is explicitly stated that the King of Egypt was rendered a nominal head of the state, with the entire country practically being under the authority of Prophet Joseph.[1]

As for the claim that Egypt was governed by the imperial law even after Joseph had assumed authority, as is apparent from the 76th ayat of Surah Yusuf, please note that this ayat has often been mistranslated. Translators understand this ayat to mean that Prophet Joseph could not arrest his brother under the imperial law. However, the correct translation would be that *'It did not behove Joseph or it was not appropriate for Joseph to arrest his brother under the imperial law'*. This phrase has always been used

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ayat 21), أَمْ عِندَهُمْ خَزَآئِنُ رَبِّكَ *'Or do they have the Lord's treasures in their keeping?'* (Surah alToor ayat 37) and وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ فِي النَّارِ لِخَزَنَةِ جَهَنَّمَ *'Those suffering in the fire will say to the treasurers of hell'* (Surah alMomin ayat 49) are examples of this word used at various places in the Qur'an.

[1] Genesis Chapter 41 verses 38-44 read: *The King said to his officials, "We will never find a better man than Joseph, a man who has God's spirit in him". The King said to Joseph, "God has shown you all this, so it is obvious that you have greater wisdom and insight than anyone else. I will put you in charge of my country and all my people will obey your orders. Your authority will be second only to mine. I now appoint you governor over all of Egypt". The King removed from his finger the ring engraved with the royal seal and put it on Joseph's finger... The King said to him, "I am the King- and no one in all Egypt shall so much as lift a hand or foot without your permission".*

The underlined clearly suggest that the King had come to venerate Prophet Joesph, and even if he might not have accepted his prophethood he was drawn very close to accepting faith in the first meeting itself.

Moreover, in Genesis Chapter 45 verse 8 it is mentioned that seven to eight years later, when his brothers arrive in Egypt, Joseph tells them, "So it was not really you who sent me here, but God. He has made me the king's highest official. I am in charge of his whole country; I am the ruler of all Egypt."

in the Qur'an to convey the meaning of 'it did not behove' or 'it wasn't appropriate' and not 'it was not within the ability or power of'. For instance, the second sentence of the 179th ayat of Surah Aal-e-Imran does not mean that 'God is unable to reveal to you the unseen'; rather, it means that 'it is not the practice of God to reveal to you the unseen'. Similarly, the opening statement of the same ayat as well as the penultimate sentence of the 143rd ayat of Surah alBaqarah do not convey God's inability; rather, they mean that it is not the practice of God to leave undistinguished oppression and faith, or believers and hypocrites. Even in the 38th ayat of Surah Yusuf itself, Joseph's words would be translated as 'It is not for us to associate anything with God', and not as 'It is beyond our ability to associate anything with God'. In the same way, it would not be appropriate to understand the ayat under discussion to mean that Prophet Joseph wanted to abide by the imperial law but was unable to arrest his brother under its provisions. Going by the usage of this phrase elsewhere in the Qur'an the correct interpretation of this ayat would be that it did not behove Prophet Joseph (Peace be upon him) to arrest his brother under the imperial law.

However, what we do understand from this ayat is that despite Prophet Joseph being in power since seven to eight years, Egyptian criminal law continued to be non-Islamic in nature. In this regard, we have already clarified earlier that the entire system of a country cannot be changed overnight; nor does an Islamic revolution require that all the laws and customs of ignorance be abolished the moment it gains authority and power. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ himself took ten years to overhaul the entire culture of the Arabian Peninsula. Hence, it is not appropriate to cite this ayat and arrive at a conclusion that Prophet Joseph never intended to establish Islamic law in Egypt or that he wished to keep executing non-Islamic law in the country.

Before we conclude, let us reflect upon the migration to Abyssinia as well. The manner in which this episode is

presented is that there was a non-Islamic government ruling Abyssinia and the Prophet ﷺ had sent some of his companions there so that they might reside there as its citizens. The companions became loyal subjects of the non-Muslim king because they were granted permission to abide by their faith and observe their rites of worship, and when a neighbouring king attacked that country, they prayed for the Abyssinian king's victory. This, however, is a grossly distorted presentation of the incident.

To begin with, when the Prophet ﷺ has sent a group of Muslims to Abyssinia, he knew that Negus was among the righteous Christians. Accordingly, he had told them that '*wa hiya ardhu sidq*' (it is a land of righteousness). Secondly, the Muslims were not sent there so as to reside as its subjects. The Prophet ﷺ had told them, '(It would be nice) if you people migrate to Abyssinia until God opens up a way for you'. This statement clearly suggests that the only intention at that time was to temporarily send those people who were being victimized and tortured beyond limits to a place where such hostilities were not expected, and that they might safely return from Abyssinia once the situation becomes more favourable. How and why should this episode be cited to prove that it is acceptable for Muslims to reside as loyal subjects in a non-Muslim country upon being granted the freedom to practice their faith and rites of worship there, and that there is nothing more expected from them beyond this?

Hadith scholars and historians are unanimous that when the emigrants reached Abyssinia and the Quraish sent its delegation to get them back and there was a discussion over this between Jafar bin Abi Talib (God be pleased with him) and Negus, the latter concurred with the Qur'anic portrayal of Jesus Christ and even testified to the prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ. Why should anyone still doubt that Negus had not accepted Islam? Imam Ahmad has narrated on the authority of Abdullah ibn Mas'ood

(who was an eye-witness to this incident) that Negus proclaimed, "You are most welcome- you and from whom you have come. I bear witness that he is God's messenger and the very same person whom we find mentioned in the Gospel and he is the same person whose glad tidings were given by Jesus Christ, the son of Mary". Can these words come from a non-Muslim? Baihaqi narrates the report that Amr bin Aas (who had led the delegation on behalf of the Quraish to bring back the Muslim emigrants) presented before the Quraish upon his return from Abyssinia in his own words thus: "Ashamah Negus states that your companion is a prophet". Can a person be considered to be a non-Muslim even when he has testified to the prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ?

The episode of the acceptance of Islam by Amr bin Aas that Ibn Hisham has narrated in his biographical work, 'Seerate Nabvi' tells us that it was Negus who had ignited the flame of faith in his heart and he had pledged his Islam at the hands of Negus before the Treaty of Hudaibiyah. At that time, Negus had told him that, 'Please listen to me and follow the Prophet ﷺ, because I swear by God that his is upon the truth. He would rise victorious over his opponents just as Moses had gained victory over Pharaoh and his army. Allamah Ibn Abdul Bar has reproduced the sermon that Negus had delivered while solemnising the marriage of Umme Habibah (God be pleased with her) with the Prophet ﷺ. This sermon clearly has the words, "I testify that Muhammad ﷺ is the messenger of God, the glad tidings of whose advent were given by Jesus Christ, the son of Mary" (*Isti'aab*).

Over and above all these, we have a narration recorded in Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim that the Prophet ﷺ offered the funeral prayers of Negus upon his death in absentia, having stated: "Today, a righteous man has expired. Arise and offer the funeral prayers of your brother, Ashamah".

Baseless Discords

A person from Kolkata writes:
"Certain passages of a Qur'an exegesis (Tafseer) have given rise to a lot of confusion among the people. People are complaining that this particular exegesis goes against the creed of Islam and it is leading people towards atheism and apostasy. I am reproducing here a couple of passages from the said book along with the objections that are being raised against them in brief. The protestors have denounced the author of this book and accused him of blasphemy and disbelief. Kindly present a detailed and conclusive discussion and let us know whether there is anything contained herein that suggests atheism or apostasy."

1. Surah alBaqarah ayat 260 has been interpreted as:

وَاِذْ قَالَ اِبْرٰهٖمُ رَبِّ اَرِنِيْ كَيْفَ تُحْيِ الْمَوْتٰى ۭ قَالَ اَوَلَمْ تُؤْمِنْ ۭ قَالَ بَلٰى
وَلٰكِنْ لِّيَطْمَىِٕنَّ قَلْبِيْ ۭ قَالَ فَخُذْ اَرْبَعَةً مِّنَ الطَّيْرِ فَصُرْھُنَّ اِلَيْكَ ثُمَّ اجْعَلْ عَلٰي
كُلِّ جَبَلٍ مِّنْهُنَّ جُزْءًا ثُمَّ ادْعُهُنَّ يَاْتِيْنَكَ سَعْيًا ۭ وَاعْلَمْ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿٢٦٠﴾

'It is said that take four birds and make them incline towards you. In other words, make yourself so familiar and accustomed to them that they come back to you whenever you leave them free. Then place a part of them on different hills.'

Objection: The exegete has denied the miracle of Prophet Abraham in his explanation.

2. Surah Saad ayaat 18-19 have been interpreted as:

اِنَّا سَخَّرْنَا الْجِبَالَ مَعَهٗ يُسَبِّحْنَ بِالْعَشِيِّ وَالْاِشْرَاقِ ﴿١٨﴾ وَالطَّيْرَ مَحْشُوْرَةً ۭ كُلٌّ لَّهٗٓ اَوَّابٌ ﴿١٩﴾

'When Prophet David used to observe the mountains and the birds, he used to be reminded of God.'

Objection: This explanation leans towards naturalism. Many ayaat of the Qur'an would stand denied if this interpretation is adopted. The Qur'anic context shows that the mountains and birds used to participate with Prophet David in exalting God.

3. Surah Saba ayat 10 has been interpreted as:

وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَا دَاوٗدَ مِنَّا فَضْلًا ۗ يٰجِبَالُ اَوِّبِيْ مَعَهٗ وَالطَّيْرَ ۚ وَاَلَنَّا لَهُ الْحَدِيْدَ ۝

'This means that God had taught Prophet David the art of softening iron.'

Objection: This goes against the interpretation adopted by the elders. They have said that iron used to become as soft as dough in the hands of Prophet David.

4. Surah Aal-e-Imran ayat 37 has been interpreted as:

كُلَّمَا دَخَلَ عَلَيْهَا زَكَرِيَّا الْمِحْرَابَ ۙ وَجَدَ عِنْدَهَا رِزْقًا ۚ قَالَ يٰمَرْيَمُ اَنّٰى لَكِ هٰذَا ۭ قَالَتْ هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللّٰهِ ۭ

'This means that Lady Mary used to relate the provisions to the blessings of God. This ayat does not have anything to suggest that she used to get the fruits of winter in summer and those of summer in winter.'

Objection: This goes against the interpretation adopted by the elders.

5. Surah alA'araf ayat 145 has been interpreted as:

وَكَتَبْنَا لَهٗ فِي الْاَلْوَاحِ

'This means that We instructed him to write the commandments on the tablets.'

Objection: The narration of Bukhari (And I wrote the Torah for you with My Own hands) is being refuted.

6. Surah Yusuf ayat 26 has been interpreted as:

وَشَهِدَ شَاهِدٌ مِّنْ اَهْلِهَا ۚ

'This means that the witness expressed its opinion.'

Objection: This goes against the interpretation adopted by Ibn Abbas that the witness was an infant.

7. Surah alAn'am ayat 158 has been interpreted as:

يَوْمَ يَأْتِيْ بَعْضُ اٰيٰتِ رَبِّكَ لَا يَنْفَعُ نَفْسًا اِيْمَانُهَا لَمْ تَكُنْ اٰمَنَتْ مِنْ قَبْلُ

'This means that when the day of death would come.'

Objection: Narrations recorded by Imam Ahmad, Bukhari and Muslim prove that this refers to the day when the sun would rise from the west. This author's interpretation goes against that narration.

8. Surah Ibraheem ayat 27 has.been interpreted as:

يُثَبِّتُ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِالْقَوْلِ الثَّابِتِ فِي الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْاٰخِرَةِ

'God would grant steadfastness to the believers as a blessing of monotheism in the life of this world and the hereafter.'

Objection: This goes against an authentic Hadith wherein steadfastness has been interpreted as the testimony of faith that would be uttered by a believer upon being questioned in the grave.

9. Surah Tur ayat 4 has been interpreted as:

وَالْبَيْتِ الْمَعْمُوْرِ ﴿٤﴾

'Baitul Ma'moor refers to masajid.'

Objection: This goes against the Hadith that says that Baitul Maamur is located on the seventh heaven.

Reply:

This is a vivid example of the meritless, worthless and futile dissentions and arguments that have occupied many of our religious scholars and pious men, whereby they are not only wasting their own time but are also bitterly confusing the minds of common Muslims to such an extent that they are being left with no opportunity to reflect upon the essentials of *deen* or the purpose of their lives. Their

world is limited to a narrow sphere, sitting in which they presume that their own success and that of the entire world lies hinged upon questions like whether or not Mary used to get the fruits of summer in winter and whether or not iron used to get softened in the hands of Prophet David. How I wish there would have been a way to bring them out of the world of their suffocating rooms and introduce them to the extensive world created by God, so that they might be shown those issues on which the success of mankind is indeed dependent and those factors that decide the rise and fall of civilizations.

What is most unfortunate is that the people who are deliberating upon such issues are regarded as our religious scholars and the leaders of the Muslim community. Muslims turn towards them in expectation of gaining some knowledge of Islam. The world looks upon them as the representatives of the religion that was brought by Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. However, despite holding such positions of responsibility, they indulge in writing and speaking about issues as irrelevant as narrated in the questions cited above. Seeing this, Muslims as well as non-Muslims are led to assume that these are the most crucial issues plaguing Islam, that God had appointed Prophet Muhammad ﷺ on the dignified station of universal prophethood with the sole purpose of clarifying these matters, and that the most important issues of this Islam that claims to guide the entire humanity to success in both the worlds- issues so important that they decide whether a person is a Muslim or not- are nothing but whether the person who adjudged the case of Joseph and the wife of the Aziz was an infant or an adult, or whether God had written down the Torah with his own hands or not. God forbid! If this is all that Islam is, as is being represented, then it would become difficult for Muslims to continue adhering to Islam, leave alone someone else accepting it. This is because except for a handful of ignorant folks, the vast majority of mankind has no interest in such futile discussions. They would never

waste their time in their investigation and research or fight over them.

I am grateful to the writer that he has not revealed the names of the author and the protestors. Because of this anonymity, no one would now be able to cast aspersions over the opinions I would express or accuse me of any sort of prejudice in favour or against any particular person. Let me make this very clear that the kind of objections that have been raised cannot be considered sufficient to accuse a Muslim of apostasy or to brand him a disbeliever or atheist, and it is absolutely impermissible to do so. People who do such things are bereft of the knowledge of *deen* altogether. It seems that they have no idea what atheism, disbelief and apostasy even mean, for they would never have used these words so generously had they known their true implications. Disbelief (*kufr*) refers to the denial of those teachings and guidelines that have been proven to emanate from Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Apostasy (*ilhad*) means a person forsakes the truth and inclines towards falsehood (the standards of truth and falsehood being the same knowledge that has been proven to emanate from Prophet Muhammad ﷺ). Atheism (*dahriyat*) means that man denies God or considers as irrelevant the role of God in the working of the universe. Now please consider which of these charges of disbelief, apostasy and atheism can be levelled with respect to the exegeses quoted above....

1. There is no point discussing whether the interpretation of the first ayat is right or wrong. Let us assume it to be an error. But is every error disbelief, atheism or apostasy? The interpretation adopted by the author for the words *surhunna ilaik* is correct as per the Arabic lexicon. Certain early commentators have also gone by the same opinion. As for the second clause, *thumma ja'al ala kulli jabalin minhunna juz'a*, he has presented the very same meaning that is evident from the ayat. How then can he be accused of denying the miracle of

Prophet Abraham (Peace be upon him)? Even if it is assumed that he has presented such an interpretation of this particular incident that fails to acknowledge it as a miracle, he would still not be considered an apostate. He can be branded an apostate only if he denies the existence of miracles altogether. As for individual miracles, there are many places in the Qur'an where the miraculous nature of certain episodes have been disputed upon- certain scholars claiming some of them to be miracles while others claiming that they are but ordinary natural phenomena. Accordingly, if a person interprets a particular incident where he claims it to be a natural phenomenon instead of a miracle, such a person would not be considered an apostate; it can only be called a mistake.

2. The interpretation of the second ayat certainly deviates from the Qur'anic text. But this would also be called a mistake, rather than disbelief. It would have been disbelief had the author overruled the Qur'anic text and said that mountains and birds do not exalt God or that they cannot exalt God. The author has not claimed either. He has just sought to interpret the ayat according to his understanding. If people are branded as disbelievers on the basis of these kinds of interpretations, then there would not be a single person who would be able to escape the charge of disbelief. The Qur'an has many such allegorical ayaat that have been interpreted differently by different people as per their own understanding. God alone knows how mountains and birds exalt Him. If someone were to claim that even mountains and birds possess those beaded rosaries that our pious elders chant upon, then I can at the most call it an erroneous interpretation, not disbelief. If another person interprets it to mean that their subservience to God's commands is itself their way of exalting God and when Prophet David (Peace be upon him) used to observe them perform this

exaltation he was at once reminded of God (just as the author understands it to be), then I can express my dissent to his views, but I cannot call him a disbeliever. I myself interpret this ayat to mean that God had bestowed upon Prophet David such a loud and melodious voice that when he used to recite the Psalms the valleys would reverberate, animals and birds would gather around him and all the surrounding environment would enter into a kind of bliss. This interpretation draws support from the Hadith that says that 'Once Abu Moosa Ashari [1] was reciting the Qur'an. The Prophet ﷺ was passing by and stopped when he heard his voice. After enjoying the recitation for a while, he told him that he has been given one of the flutes of David.' This interpretation confirms to my understanding and insight. If someone does not concur with it, he can call it an error, but he cannot call me a disbeliever.

3. Coming to the third ayat, the interpretation adopted by the author does not go against the words of the Qur'an. The Qur'an says that 'We made iron soft for him'. As for the interpretation adopted by the elders that iron used to become soft and pliable as soon as it came into the hands of Prophet David, this opinion is that of Hasan Basari, Qatadah and A'amash. But these gentlemen were not commissioned by God; going against their opinion does not make a person a disbeliever. Nowhere has the Qur'an supported this opinion, nor do we have any Hadith of the Prophet ﷺ that suggests the same. It is sheer injustice to compel people to believe in the words of Hasan Basari and Qatadah and A'amash in the same way as they are expected to believe in the Qur'an and the Prophet ﷺ or to brand such people who deviate from their opinions

[1] Abu Moosa Ashari had a very melodious voice. Abu Usman Nahdi claims that he has never heard a voice better than that of Abu Moosa.

as disbelievers just as those people who deviate from the express words of the Qur'an and the Prophet ﷺ are.

4. The objection that has been raised on the interpretation of this ayat is as superfluous as that raised on the interpretation of the third ayat. The words of the ayat are: 'Whenever Zakariya used to enter the chamber of Mary (Peace be upon them), he used to notice some or the other provision present with her. And when he used to ask her from where all this has come, she used to say that this is from God.' As for the claim that she used to get fruits of summer in winter and fruits of winter in summer, nothing of this kind has been mentioned either in the Qur'an or in any authentic Hadith. Rather, this is an opinion of Qatadah, Akramah, Saeed bin Jubair, Zahaq and some others. Would people who deviate from their opinion also be now declared disbelievers? If that is indeed the case, then what would you say about Imam Mujahid who has completely deviated from these elders' views and interpreted the word 'provision (rizq)' as 'knowledge' and has opined that certain scriptures containing knowledge were found with Lady Mary? How about the Hadith narrated by Jabir bin Abdullah in which says that once the Prophet ﷺ visited Lady Fatimah (God be pleased with her) while he was hungry and asked for some food? She remarked that she had nothing to offer him. Just as the Prophet ﷺ returned back, her neighbour sent her some bread and meat. Lady Fatimah immediately asked one of her sons to call the Prophet back home. When she offered him the food, he asked her from where she got this. Lady Fatimah relied, 'O dear father, this is from God'. At this, the Prophet ﷺ exclaimed, 'O my daughter, all gratitude is due to God who has made you in the likeness of Lady Mary. Whenever she used to get any

provision from God, she used to say that this is from God'.

If on the basis of this Hadith a person were to opine that Lady Mary did not get provisions from any supernatural source, but that God had made sure that seeing her alone and helpless in her chamber, some or the other person would keep providing her with something to eat at regular intervals, then would such a person be called a disbeliever?

Moreover, what is so beneficial about being provided with fruits of summer in winter and those of winter in summer? The fruit God has provided in a particular season is most beneficial in that season itself and it complements that weather perfectly. Being provided with the same fruit in another season might be called a miracle, but it cannot be called a blessing.

5. Elaborating upon this ayat, Imam Razi writes:
   'It should be understood that the words of this ayat do not clearly specify the nature of those tablets or the act of writing the same. Now if its details are substantiated by any other reliable source we should adopt them. If not, then it is better to reserve any comments on this issue.'

   Would Imam Razi also be condemned as a disbeliever because he considers the details concerning the nature of writing of those tablets unsubstantiated despite the Hadith recorded by Imam Bukhari? Can a person be said to be a denier of the words of the Prophet ﷺ if he happens to be uncertain of the words or chain of a particular Hadith and hence doubts its authenticity? Can there be a greater injustice than this? There would hardly be any religious scholar from among the respectable elders who could be absolved of such 'disbelief' if such a benchmark is resorted to. Let alone insignificant people, even those great scholars who command a following in the Muslim world since many

centuries have presented opinions that clash with certain narrations. Would each of these be declared a denier of the Prophet's ﷺ commands?

The Hadith quoted by the protestors has been recorded in Saheeh Bukhari in four different places, each narration being mutually different.

"In Kitab alQadr, Tawus narrates from Abu Hurairah that Istafakallahu bi kalamihi wa khatta laka biyadihi. This is the only narration in which it has been said that God wrote the Torah with His own hands."

"In Kitab atTauheed and aHadith alAnbiya, Hameed bin AbdurRahman narrates from Abu Hurairah that Istafakallahu birisalatihi wa bi kalamihi. In this narration, there is no mention of the Torah being written by the hand."

"In Kitab alTafseer, Muhammad bin Sireen narrates from Abu Hurairah that Istafakallahu birisalatihi wa istafaqa linafsishi wa anzala alaikatTauraat. Even in this narration, there is no mention of the Torah being written by the hand.

Imam Muslim has recorded four aHadith in Kitab alQadr, each of which has been narrated by Abu Hurairah (God be pleased with him). Three of these narrations are bereft of this detail. The same is the case with all other reliable books of Hadith- most of the narrations mentioned in those books do not clarify that the Torah was hand-written by God.

This cross-study makes it obvious that this particular Hadith has not been narrated verbatim from the Prophet ﷺ (*bil-lafz*), but only its import has been narrated (*bil-ma'ani*). Secondly, it cannot be ascertained whether or not the Prophet ﷺ had said the words *khatta laka biyadihi* (God had written you the Torah with His Own hands). Thus, this is the highest form of irresponsibility, rather a crime, to declare a

Muslim a disbeliever on the basis of an issue that has such uncertainties associated with it.

6. Here, an opinion of Ibn Abbas (God be pleased with him) has been cited to declare that the author has committed disbelief. However, it should be noted that three different opinions of Ibn Abbas have been recorded in this regard. One opinion is that the witness who adjudged the case of Joseph (Peace be upon him) and the wife of the Aziz was bearded (*dhu-lihyah*). The second opinion is that the witness belonged to the council of the Egyptian king. The third opinion is that the witness was a child in a cradle. Now why do the protestors not take a bold step and declare Ibn Abbas a disbeliever as well? Also why not declare Mujahid, Akramah, Hasan, Qatadah, Muhammad ibn Is'haaq, Saddi and Zaid bin Aslam as disbelievers as well, for they are unanimous in their opinion that the said witness was an adult man and not an infant.

   It is so unfortunate that a detail that God has not considered significant enough or even worth specifying has been given so much importance that a person is being declared a disbeliever if he passes over it. The Qur'an usually refrains from going into unnecessary details while narrating an incident and only narrates those important aspects that have a bearing on the intended purpose behind that narrative. However, there are certain exegetes who have a strange habit of digging into those details that the Qur'an has itself overlooked. For example, the Qur'an says that Prophet Abraham had been commanded to select four birds. The purpose behind narrating this incident has nothing to do with the species of those birds; hence there was no need to elaborate upon these details. But there are certain exegetes who have written (deriving from sources best known to them alone) that these birds were peacock, crow, pigeon etc. Similarly, all that the Qur'an says is that a witness cited

circumstantial evidence to prove the innocence of Joseph. The age of the witness is absolutely irrelevant here. This is why the Qur'an makes no mention of the witness's age. But some exegetes found it necessary to ascertain the age of the witness. Those who are interested in such issues are free to accept the opinions of those exegetes. But why should anyone brand someone a disbeliever if he decides to ignore those opinions and limit his exegesis to only those points that have been mentioned in the Qur'an? And how can anyone justify such a branding on the mere basis that he has deviated from the opinion of some elder? Are these 'elders' some prophets that the Muslims are required to have faith on them as well?

7. The literal translation of the seventh ayat is as follows: *'Do they wait for anything except that the angels should come to them or your Lord should come or there come some of the signs of your Lord? The day that some of the signs of your Lord will come no soul will benefit from its faith that did not believe before or had earned through his faith some good.'*

   The 'day' referred to in this ayat can either be the day when God's punishment looms over them (as is mentioned in the 85th ayat of Surah alMomin that 'But never did their faith benefit them once they saw Our punishment') or it can allude to the day a person meets his death (as is mentioned in a Hadith that 'Verily, God does not accept the repentance of a slave when the soul starts departing from the body and there is a rattling in the throat') or it can also refer to the day when the clear signs of the apocalypse become evident (as is mentioned in the Hadith quoted here to object to the author's interpretation). Now on what basis can a person be called a disbeliever if he mentions one of these interpretations and at the same time does not deny the other interpretations? When the words of the Qur'an equally support all these three interpretations

and each of these has been derived from the Qur'an or the Hadith, there is no reason why someone should be called a disbeliever if he goes with any one of these accepted interpretations.

8. The meaning of the eighth ayat adopted by the author is completely in accordance with the words of the Qur'an and does not go against the Hadith quoted by those who have objected to it. The cited Hadith explains only one aspect of this ayat- how God would grant steadfastness to the believer with the testimony of faith the moment he steps foot into his afterlife. The author is not denying this. Even he believes that steadfastness would be granted in the hereafter. However, if the people who have objected to this interpretation cite this Hadith to deny the claim that steadfastness would be granted to the believer by virtue of the testimony of faith in the present life, then they would be guilty of denying the Qur'an itself, for the Qur'an itself says 'in the worldly life and in the hereafter' and the Hadith does not have anything to suggest that it refutes the clause 'in the worldly life'.

   It is an extreme form of ignorance to assume that there can be no interpretation of any ayat other than or more than that narrated in some Hadith or opinion that has been narrated in the context of that particular ayat. Those who come across some Hadith or opinion cited in some exegesis of the Qur'an and feel that that is *the* only interpretation of that ayat and then go on to declare anyone who presents an interpretation other than or more than that as a denier of that Hadith or opinion are actually completely unaware of the practice of our elders and out of this horrifying ignorance they tend to attack the faith of pious gentlemen. Such people should go through the following statement made by Allamah Ibn Qayyum:

   'The practice of Ibn Abbas and other elders is that they usually point towards some particular aspect of the

meaning or argument related to an ayat. Ignorant folk, however, feel that there can be no other interpretation of that ayat other than the one presented by those elders.' *(Elam al Muqein vol.1, p.58)*

9. The objection that has been raised on the interpretation of 'alBaitul Ma'moor' is similar to the one raised on the previous ayat. What has been said in the Hadith is that alBaitul Ma'amoor is located in the heavens. But that should not be understood to mean that it is not located on earth. All it means is that it is located in the heavens as well. It is sheer ignorance to adopt the aspect of exclusivity. The words of the ayat are general and are open to alternate interpretations. A person can even say that Baitul Ma'amoor refers to the Ka'aba; the entire earth can also be called Baitul Ma'amoor. One may even deduce from the construction of the word alBait that the article 'al' used here gives it a meaning of every 'frequented place'. All these interpretations are in sync with the object on which the oath of alBaitul Ma'amoor has been taken. There is, thus, nothing to warrant a censure of all other interpretations.

   Moreover, it is a grave injustice to accuse a person of denying or belying a Hadith when all he has done is maintain silence over it. Does being silent over anything necessarily mean its denial or falsification? Is it not possible that he was not aware of this Hadith? He cannot be branded a disbeliever even if, for the sake of argument, he maintains silence over this Hadith because he is not inclined towards it. A person can be declared a disbeliever only if he believes a Hadith to be authentic and then says that he does not believe in what the Prophet ﷺ is known to have said from definite sources. However, if he doubts the authenticity of the Hadith, is unsure whether it has indeed been narrated from the Prophet ﷺ or not and hence keeps

away from quoting that particular Hadith, then such a person can neither be called a disbeliever nor an apostate.

Conclusion:

This discussion makes it amply clear that there is no evidence of any disbelief, apostasy or atheism in any of the interpretations reproduced by the questioner. Although some of the author's views can be called erroneous, it is one thing to be in error and quite another to be guilty of disbelief, apostasy or atheism. Anyone who is aware of the principles of Islamic jurisprudence and has knowledge of the evidence required to declare someone a disbeliever would never attempt to pass a judgment of disbelief against a person just because he holds views that he might regard as false or erroneous. It is, however, a great misfortune of Muslims that some of those people who have assumed authority among them are indeed those who have no proper knowledge of Islamic juristic principles and their knowledge can be likened to the burden carried by donkeys (as alluded to in Surah alJuma'ah). Some others do have proper knowledge but have no fear of accountability before God, allowing them to recklessly issue declarations of disbelief against every such person who fails to make it to their good books. Such people conveniently use words like disbelief and apostasy to refer to 'error' without any hesitation whatsoever. Every such view that they consider false is either pronounced disbelief or apostasy or atheism. If they are generous enough, they would suffice at declaring it a form of corruption or ignorance, there being no word of lesser intensity in their vocabulary.

Those who are familiar with my nature know that I have always distanced myself from such feuds. Even if a person fond of debates tries to engage me in an argument, I prefer to opt out of it by conceding my defeat. The fact that I'm writing on this particular dissention today should not be constructed to mean that I was interested in intervening

in it. Such dissentions are becoming so common in our community these days that it has become impossible to refute and clarify each one of them. The only reason I'm indulging in this discussion is that I wish to appeal to the conscience of those scholars who are sowing discord among the Muslim community and crippling the strength of Islam, making their own selves and Islam a laughing stock in front of the entire world. I also wish to inform the Muslims at large that the issues that are being raked up by their religious leaders to create conflict between them are utterly baseless and unfounded. They are only wasting their time and money by engaging in such dissentions and exhausting the strength of our community. Such an act of foolishness neither gives them anything other than humiliation in this world, nor does God get pleased with such practices.

Tarjumanul Qur'an
Rabiul Akhir 1358 AH/ June 1939 CE

Excommunication- a Major Concern

In the year 1935, certain renowned religious scholars declared two notable elders disbelievers. On this occasion, the following article was published in Tarjumanul Qur'an. The two elders against whom the edict was issued had already passed away. Since then, most of those scholars who had issued the edict have also passed away. May Allah forgive their sins. We are reproducing that article here not to reignite some past issue; our intention is only to educate the masses about some points.

Of the many vices that have developed during the phase of decline of Muslims, a major and dangerous one relates to declaring one another disbelievers and impious and cursing one another. People have played with the straight and simple Islamic creed and have allowed their imaginations and contorted readings to invent such sub-points and components within it that are mutually exclusive and contradictory, having no source or basis in the Qur'an or the Sunnah, at least not worth being considered important by God and His Prophet ﷺ. Then these scholars (May God forgive them) started attaching so much importance to these secondary issues that they declared them to be the benchmark of faith, on the basis of which they broke up Islam to form scores of sects. Each such sect accused others of disbelief, of being corrupt, misguided, destined to hell and what not! This, despite the fact that God had clearly demarcated the difference between belief and disbelief in His perspicuous book and has not given anyone the right or authority to declare anything they wish to be Islam or disbelief on the basis of their own whims and

fancies. Whether this matter owes its origin to narrow-mindedness or it was a result of some pure intentions, or selfishness and envy and ego arising from some bad intention, it has nevertheless caused more damage to the Muslim community than anything ever has.

As far as declaring someone a believer or disbeliever is concerned, that is not at all the job of any human being. This matter is related directly to God and He alone would decide upon it on the Day of Judgment. If there's anything that human beings can decide upon, it is only related to whether a person is within the premises of Islam or has strayed beyond. Such a decision would be based on the defining features of the Muslim community that have been conveyed to us by God and His Prophet ﷺ. The benchmarks for Islam that have been communicated to us are as follows:

> *'Islam is that you testify that there is no deity other than Allah and that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah, and establish prayer and offer zakat and observe the Ramazan fasts and perform Hajj to the House of God if you are capable of doing so.'*
>
> *(Muslim, Abu Dawood, Tirmizi, Nisai)*
>
> *'I have been commanded to fight against people until they testify that there is no deity other than Allah and that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah and establish prayer and offer zakat. If and when they do so, they would save their lives from me, except that some right of Islam is established against them and their account rests with God Almighty.'*
>
> *(Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmad)*

These are the frontiers of Islamic society. We have been commanded to treat as Muslims all those who are within its boundaries. No one has the right to excommunicate them. As for those who have strayed beyond these boundaries, we should treat them in a way that confirms with the 'right of Islam'. In either case, we are not entitled to decide over what lies within anyone's heart. Our jurisdiction is limited to what is apparent. Even

the Prophet ﷺ has always gone by the obvious. Accordingly, we have a Hadith recorded in Bukhari and Muslim that once Hażrat Ali (God be pleased with him) sent some money from Yemen in the service of the Prophet ﷺ, which he distributed among four people. At this, one of the people present there exclaimed, 'O messenger of God, fear God'. The Prophet replied, 'Woe unto you! Is there anyone on earth who is more entitled than me of having the fear of God?' Hazrat Khalid, who was present there, asked the Prophet, 'O messenger of God, should I not kill this man?' At this, the Prophet replied, 'No, it is possible that he offers prayers.' He said, 'There are many people who offer prayers and utter such things that are not really in their hearts'. The Prophet replied, 'I have not been commanded to open up people's hearts or stomachs to ascertain the truth'.

Imam Shafi'i and Imam Ahmad have recorded a narration in their treatises and Imam Malik had recorded it in his Muatta that a person from among the Ansar was once speaking to the Prophet ﷺ in private. During the course of their conversation, the Prophet enquired with a loud voice, 'Does that person not testify that there is no deity other than Allah?' The Ansar submitted, 'Yes, O messenger of God. But his testimony is not trustworthy.' At this, the Prophet asked, 'Does he not testify that Muhammad is the messenger of God?' He submitted, 'Yes, he does testify to this, but his testimony is not trustworthy.' The Prophet asked again, 'Does he not offer prayers?' He replied, 'Yes, but his prayers are not trustworthy.' At this, the Prophet ﷺ exclaimed, 'God has forbidden me to kill such people.'

How unjust it is for someone to issue an edict of excommunication against a Muslim who confesses his faith on all that God and His messenger ﷺ want him to believe in and is well within the premises of Islam as per the aforementioned parameters! This audacious impudence is not against the people, but against God Himself. The

person who does this actually revolts against God by declaring a person disbeliever, when God's laws clearly say that he is in fact a Muslim. It is for the same reason that the Prophet ﷺ has strictly forbidden against accusing anyone of disbelief (*kufr*) or impiety (*fisq*). He has even gone on record to say that if someone accuses a person of disbelief when in fact he is not a disbeliever, then in that case the ruling of disbelief rebounds on the accuser himself:

> *'If a person calls his Muslim brother a disbeliever, then this statement would surely hold true for either of them.'* (Bukhari)
>
> *'Whenever a person falsely accuses another person of impiety or disbelief, that accusation would rebound upon the accuser himself if the accused is not an impious or disbelieving person.'* (Bukhari)
>
> *'If a person accused someone of being a disbeliever or enemy of God, despite that person not being so, then this accusation surely rebounds upon the accuser.'* (Muslim)
>
> *'He who curses a believer is as if he has murdered him, and he who falsely accuses a believer of disbelief is as if he has murdered him.'* (Bukhari)

Such an accusation of disbelief and impiety is not only a violation of an individual's rights, but a community crime as well. This is an injustice against the entire Islamic society, causing great damage to Muslims as a whole. This can be easily understood with a little contemplation:

The basic difference between an Islamic and a non-Islamic society is that non-Islamic societies are founded on the basis of common race, colour, language and nationality. On the contrary, Islamic societies are founded on the common bonds of *deen* alone. Differences in faith and ideology do not harm non-Islamic societies. This is because mutual differences of faith and ideology do not dissolve their bonds of race or colour or language or nationality. No matter how enormous their differences of thought, their blood relations remain intact, there is no change in their

bonds of nationality, nor can their bonds of language be hampered or their unity of race broken. Hence, differences in ideology do not pose any threat to a non-Islamic society. But as far as Islam is concerned, the factor that binds people of different races, colours, languages and nationalities together to form one single community is nothing but the unity of their faith. Here, ideology is of prime importance; race, colour, language and nationality having no importance at all. Hence, anyone who severs the bond of *deen* and creed is actually guilty of cutting the rope of God that unites all those people who worship One God, follow one prophet and believe in one book. To call any person or group 'disbeliever' does not only amount to an attack on his faith and intentions, but it also amounts to the severing of all bonds of fraternity, love, civilization, economics and mutual cooperation between that person/group and the Islamic society, as if an organ or group of organs has been amputated or cut off from the body of the Muslim community.

This action can be deemed acceptable only if it is taken in accordance with the commands of God and His messenger ﷺ. In such a case, amputating the putrefied organ from the body is a valid and desirable service to Islam. However, if divine law does not recognize that organ as decayed and it is unjustly severed away from the body, then this would be a greater injustice on the body from which the organ has been severed than on the organ itself.

It is for this reason that God and His messenger ﷺ have laid great emphasis on preserving such relationships that are based on *deen*.

God says:

وَلَا تَقُولُوا لِمَنْ أَلْقَىٰ إِلَيْكُمُ السَّلَامَ لَسْتَ مُؤْمِنًا

Do not say to him who offers you the greeting of peace (to convey his Islam) that 'You are not a believer'.

(Surah anNisa ayat 94)

There is a Hadith that says that once during a battle (in which the Prophet was not participating in person), a person called out to the Muslims, '*Assalamu alaikum. La ilaha illallahu MuhammadurRasoolAllah*' (Peace be upon you. There is no deity but Allah and Muhammad is His messenger). However, one of the Muslim soldiers killed him on the assumption that he was saying this only to save his life and was not sincere in his words. When the Prophet ﷺ was informed of this he got furious and called that Muslim soldier to account. Upon interrogating him, he told the Prophet that the man whom he had killed had uttered the greetings of peace and the articles of faith for no other reason than that he wanted to save himself from their swords. At this the Prophet remarked, 'Had you opened up is heart to ascertain the truth?'

One of the companions asked the Prophet, 'Suppose a person attacks me and cuts off my hand. But when I attack him he utters the articles of faith (*kalimah*). Am I allowed to kill him in such a scenario?' The Prophet replied in the negative. The companion submitted that 'O messenger of God, he cut off my hand'. The Prophet replied, 'You still cannot kill him. If you kill him he would be in the position that you were before having killed him and you would relegate yourself to that position in which he was before having uttered the articles of faith.'

In yet another Hadith, the Prophet said, "If a person aims his sphere on a disbeliever and the disbeliever utters the article of faith (*la ilaha illallah*) just when the head of the sphere reaches his throat, it is incumbent upon the Muslim to immediately withdraw his sphere.

It has also been mentioned in a Hadith that abusing a Muslim is impiety (*fisq*) and fighting against a Muslim is an act of disbelief (*kufr*).

We have been told all this to make it clear that the strength and establishment of the Muslim community has no other basis than the relation of *deen* between its

members. The community would fall apart if the Muslims fail to honour this relation and tend to sever it at every lame opportunity. As a consequence, there would be no collective strength of the nation that has been raised up to call everyone towards righteousness and piety and exalt the name of God against evil forces.

Having said this, let me make it clear that it is not at all our intention to summarily dismiss the act of declaring someone 'disbeliever' or 'impious' as impermissible, especially when the accused has uttered or written things that are evidently blasphemous. This is neither the intention of the ayat and aHadith we have quoted above, nor of the appeals we have made in the beginning of this article. And how can it even be so? It is as much disastrous to welcome or entertain a disbeliever within the Islamic community as it is to excommunicate a Muslim from Islam. But the issue we want to emphasize upon is that we need to be extremely cautious while declaring a Muslim a disbeliever... the same level of caution that is exercised while sentencing someone to death.

Every person who is a Muslim and believes in the article of faith, *la ilaha illallah* should be assumed to have sincere faith. If a person were to say or do something that hints towards disbelief, then it should be assumed that he must have done so not because of any disbelief, but out of ignorance or lack of understanding. Instead of issuing an edict of excommunication immediately upon hearing him, we ought to sit with him, reason with him and try to make him understand in the best possible manner. If he still refuses to give in or is adamant upon his views, then the point on which he is so unyielding should be seen in light of the Qur'an to ascertain whether it clashes with any clear criterion of faith mentioned therein. It should also be seen if there is any way by which his contentious words or deeds can be explained in a way that they confirm to the Islamic creed. Now, if it does not go against any clear clause of the Qur'an and there is a way to explain it out, then such a

person cannot be declared a disbeliever. At the most, such a person can be called misguided... and misguided in that particular issue alone, not in a generalised sense.

However, if his belief goes against the clear and established creed of the Qur'an and the person remains adamant upon his views even after making it known to him that his beliefs clash with the teachings of the Qur'an, and there is no possible way by which his views can be appropriately or convincingly explained out, then in such a case an edict of disbelief or impiety can be issued against him if the situation so demands. Even in this case, it is important to keep in mind the status and intensity of the accused and the accusation. All crimes and criminals are not alike. True justice requires that cases should be adjudged in accordance with the status and intensity of the criminal and the crime concerned; treating all cases in the same manner is not justice at all.

As we have already mentioned earlier, there are two aspects of disbelief and Islam- the apparent and the hidden. The hidden relates to the person's heart and intentions, while the apparent relates to his words and deeds. Although the intentions of the heart can be made out from a person's words and deeds to a certain extent, this would be based more on a vague assumption than definite knowledge. To adjudge the belief and disbelief of a person merely on the basis of vague assumptions without the help of any supporting knowledge whatsoever is an explicit form of injustice. Hence, it is always better to leave matters of faith to God, because He alone can know who has sincere faith and who does not. إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ اهْتَدَى ۞ *"Verily your Lord is most knowing of who strays from His way, and He is most knowing of who is guided."* (Surah anNajm ayat 30). We can only see what is apparent; we can form an opinion based only upon what is apparent of a person's words and deeds. It is quite possible that a person might be uttering words of disbelief out of ignorance or innocence, but he is actually a very sincere believer from

within, the love of God and His messenger that he has in his heart being more than that present in the hearts of many a religious speaker and disciple. Similarly, it is also possible that the person who declares his faith from atop rooftops and abides by the Islamic codes to the hilt is actually a pretentious hypocrite. Hence, a person should be very scared of his accountability before God if he decides upon someone's disbelief merely on the basis of what is apparent thereof. One should think a million times about the burden of responsibility involved before issuing such an edict and should weigh the pros and cons of adjudging such a matter vis-a-vis staying away from it altogether.

It is obvious that different people have different temperaments, abilities and intellectual capacities. Some people are very simple and naive. They accept things on their face value. They are neither capable of, nor are they interested in delving into intricacies and details. On the contrary, there are others who are inclined towards deep contemplation. They are not satisfied with concise information. If they fail to find details of a topic from their sources, they tend to make them up. There are innumerable different inclinations and intellectual competencies that such people might possess. Some are suspicious in nature while others are inclined to believe in things. Some indulge in materialistic and physical pursuits, while others lean towards rationalism. Some are able to strike the core of the issue, while others get lost somewhere in the middle. Some are realists, while others find pleasure in the world of their fantasies. In short, there are many ideological paths that men tend to adopt as per their own natural tendencies. It is not possible for anyone to change the natural inclinations, dispositions and intellectual capacities of another person; nor does anyone have the right to expect or demand that other people should have the same standards of natural inclination, disposition and tendency as they personally do, or that it is mandatory for them to mould themselves as per his taste.

God, who has revealed Islam for the guidance of all humanity, is most knowing and considerate of the inherent differences in human nature. It is for this reason that He has placed the foundations of *deen* on such simple and concise elements of faith that are equally acceptable to every person right from the village simpleton to the detail-loving philosopher to the scientist who is in search of truth. It is the simplicity and concise nature of these elements of faith that have made them worthy of being accepted as the basic principles of a universal religion for all humanity. It is sufficient for a person who is incapable of contemplation to believe that there is one God, that Muhammad ﷺ is His messenger, the Qur'an is His revealed book and that we would be presented before Him on the Day of Judgment. For those who have the ability to engage in detailed studies, there is so much scope in this concise list itself that they can embark upon innumerable paths in the pursuit of their search for the truth according to their strength and inclination and continue their pursuits as far as they are able to. They can spend their entire lives in this pursuit without their thirst for knowledge ever getting quenched.

As long as such a person remains within the boundaries of faith specified by the Qur'an and does not trespass into forbidden territory, he is free to pursue whatever path he wishes and venture as far as he wants to satisfy his inquisitiveness. Such a person would not be considered an apostate, regardless of how much we are opposed to his views.

For instance, in the context of 'belief in God', the only thing one is required to have faith in is that 'the Lord and Creator of the universe is One God and He alone is worth worshipping'. But it is not possible for an intellectual person to understand this concise clause in the same way that a simple farmer would. Then, a person having a certain bend of mind would contemplate over this clause and arrive at a detailed concept of God and His qualities and the nature of His relation with the universe which might be

quite different from the concept arrived at by another person having a different inclination. But as long as they all adhere to the basic clause of faith, they are all Muslims... even if their individual views differ greatly from each other in their details and even if some of them might have erred miserably in arriving at certain inferences.

The same applies to revelation, prophethood, angels and the hereafter. There are certain Islamic principles in their regard that are fundamental in nature and can be called the 'essentials' of faith. The rest can be termed details, some of which can be found clearly specified in the Qur'an or one can at least arrive at those details by means of definite conclusions that can be derived from the Qur'anic text. There are some other details that man formulates by virtue of his natural inclination and understanding. It is very likely that man's intellect might betray him in arriving at most of these details and he may err to such an extent that the actual import of the point under study might be far removed from his own conclusions. But as long as he does not lose touch of the essentials of that particular article of faith none of his misguided views and readings can expel him from the boundaries of Islam, no matter how far he lands up from the universally accepted creed or how much we stand in need of criticizing and opposing those particular deviations in faith that he has subscribed to.

If we now pause and reflect, we would easily come to know the origin of sectarianism that we find in Islam. The essentials of faith and the fine hints towards their details that have been enumerated in the Qur'an and the Hadith have been understood variously by various scholars. On the basis of their own intellectual capacities and natural inclinations they embarked upon separate paths, and in the quest for their detailed understanding they arrived at different sub-components and secondary aspects of religion by employing certain derivations and deductions. There was nothing wrong till this point. And there was nothing

wrong either with each group claiming that its own interpretation was right and debating with other groups to convince them in adopting their interpretation. But what unfortunately happened was that each such group resorted to an unwarranted extremism by including their own interpretations and readings in the list of 'principles and essentials' of faith and then each group started accusing all those other groups of heresy and disbelief who did not believe in those set of beliefs that *they* had derived. This is where conflicts in faith arose and this was the very point of origin of this unjust practice of sectarianism. It is true that most of the paths adopted on the basis of deductions and interpretations were absolutely erroneous. But every error is not necessarily disbelief. It is indeed permissible to call a mistake a mistake and to call the mistaken person wrong and misguided and to strive to bring him back to the right path. But it is not at all permissible to call a person a disbeliever as long as that person does not disbelieve in those essentials of faith that God has explicitly commanded us to believe in, regardless of the enormity of his deviation.

It is quite unfortunate that our religious scholars are not at all ready to abandon this old practice. They have neglected the difference between essential and secondary elements, and that between clear and explicit commands and interpretations. They are holding even those secondary elements as basic principles of faith that they have themselves (or their elders have) derived from those basic principles as per their own understandings. They regard even those interpretations as explicit commands that have been derived by their groups from those explicit commands. As a result, they issue edicts of disbelief even against those people who refuse to believe in their interpretations and secondary elements just as they are issued against a person who disbelieves in the essentials of faith and the explicit commands of the Qur'an. Initially, this tug-of-war and extremism had only led to the formation of multiple sects in the Muslim community. But

now, it can be seen that this torrent of accusations and counter-accusations of disbelief by our religious scholars is not only creating an aversion in the hearts of Muslims against these very scholars but also against the idea of religion represented by these scholars. The authority that religious scholars used to have on Muslims is gradually waning off. When they hear their speeches their hearts get disinterested in religion instead of drawing closer. There is a generalized opinion that is developing regarding religious gatherings and literature that they contain nothing other than worthless arguments. In this age of disbelief and impiety, religious doctrines could have been introduced to the common Muslim folk only if they would have had faith in religious scholars and they would have benefitted from their writings and speeches. Alas, these sectarian infightings and these excommunicating practices are closing the doors upon this one medium that was left. This has been a major cause of spread of religious ignorance and misguidance among Muslims. How I wish our religious scholars would realize their mistake and do themselves a favour by discarding this practice that has humiliated them in the eyes of the very community that used to once have high regards and admiration for them.

Tarjumanul Qur'an
Safar 1354 AH/ May 1935 CE)

Excommunication for Committing a Major Sin

Some while back, some members of an Indian reformist organization (who were probably upset at the extremist ideologies of their organization) wrote the following letter to the editor of Tarjumanul Qur'an:

"We have come together to form an organization which believes that the one who commits a major sin becomes a disbeliever. We do not differentiate between impiety (fisq) and disbelief (kufr). Our organization treats ordinary Muslims at par with the status granted to the People of the Book by the Qur'an, which means that we marry within our organization only. While we do accept brides from Muslims outside our organization, we do not give our girls to them in marriage. What is your opinion about this ideology and practice of ours? Is it right or wrong? If it is indeed wrong, then please make our mistake clear to us in a convincing manner."

Before attempting a reply, we found it necessary to investigate into the nature of this organization. After obtaining the required information, we offered them the following reply:

Upon investigation, I have realized that there is not a single member in your organization who has proper knowledge and understanding of *deen*; this also being amply evident from the issues you have mentioned in your letter. These issues bear testimony to the fact that the person who has forged them has no insight in the Qur'an or the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ. Please don't feel offended by my observations, but take them in the right spirit. After all,

it is a duty incumbent upon every Muslim to guide his fellow Muslim brothers towards the truth. You see, forming an opinion about matters related to *deen* without proper knowledge, and then declaring these to be *deen* and relying upon these misguided opinions to formulate principles of individual and community life is itself the most severe form of impiety and the greatest of all major sins. We can claim to be Muslims only if and when we have faith in, and abide by the *deen* that has been presented in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. It is a prerequisite of this faith and the obedience we owe to it that the principles we adopt and the very foundations on which we establish our creed and practices should all be derived from the Qur'an and the Sunnah. If a person who does not have any insight or understanding of the Qur'an and the Sunnah formulates opinions based on his own inclinations and then declares these opinions to be *deen*, then such a person is not actually a follower of *deen*, but a follower of his own desires. All other major sins pale out in comparison with this sin!

I would also like to make it clear that the summary knowledge that is sufficient to have faith in *deen* and the basic acquaintance of the simple teachings of the Qur'an and of the Hadith that is sufficient to understand the broad principles of *deen* are not at all sufficient to formulate opinions on issues related to *deen* or to guide other people towards the practice of *deen*. To consider it sufficient to venture into these fields on the basis of as much knowledge is a grave mistake, the consequence of which I have already mentioned above.

Having said this, allow me to reply to the issues you have asked me in your kind letter.

Disbelief (*kufr*) refers to the state wherein a person refuses to have faith in *deen* or refuses to surrender himself before its injunctions and commands after the *deen* has been presented before him or after he is introduced to *deen* and he has completely understood what it is. Out of innocence or unawareness, if a person leads a life against

the principles of *deen* because he does not know what *deen* is, then such a condition does not come under the definition of 'disbelief'; rather, such a state is called 'ignorance'. The Arab disbelievers were in a state of ignorance before the advent of the Prophet ﷺ. They became disbelievers only after he presented the *deen* before them and they refused to accept it.

It should also be understood that disbelief has two aspects:

1. The first form of disbelief is that state of refusal and rebellion which is by its inherent nature outside the premises of faith.
2. The second form of disbelief refers to that un-Islamic condition, by manifestation of which a person is declared to be excommunicated from Islam and all his ties with the Muslim society are severed.

Mixing the first kind of disbelief with sin is an injustice and goes against the Qur'an. Sin is, without a doubt, the opposite of faith. However, a single sin, no matter how grave, is by no means a cause of permanent deprivation of faith. Just like a disbeliever, even a believer may happen to commit major sins. However, what differentiates the sin of a believer and a disbeliever is that the believer remains in a state of disbelief only while he is involved in the sin, but as soon as he comes out of the overpowering nature of his desires or the temporary veil of innocence that had covered his heart, he feels embarrassed of himself and repents before God. He fears the punishment of the hereafter and resolves never to repeat that sin. Such a sin, no matter how grave, does not make him a disbeliever. It only makes him a sinner, and his repentance brings him back to faith. On the contrary, the sin of a disbeliever differs because he takes pleasure in his sinful act and life and does not see any harm in committing it. He does not care if God and His messenger have forbidden that particular act. He is obstinate in his act and even takes pride

in doing so. He does not feel any kind of remorse. This second kind of sin paves the way for deprivation of faith (i.e. true deprivation of faith and not just an apparent deprivation) even if the sin committed with this state of mind is not a major one, but it is what is generally perceived to be a minor sin. It is absolutely wrong to accord the same status to these two kinds of sinners and to declare both of them as disbelievers. Rather, such an irresponsible act would itself be considered a major sin. Right from the very first century to the present day, there has been no group that has subscribed to such an opinion (except for the *Kharijite* and *Ma'atzala* factions). Moreover, even if you say that in principle, a person who deliberately goes against the commands of God and His messenger with all audacity is a disbeliever, you have no right to declare about any particular person that he has become a disbeliever because of having committing an act that is committed by disbelievers and that he stands excommunicated. It is only for God to decide who is really in a state of disbelief and who isn't.

Now let us ponder over the second kind of disbelief which is sufficient to expel a person from Islam and sever all his ties from Muslim society. It should be understood in this regard that Islamic law has not given this authority to every other person to pass judgments of disbelief on such people. Just as the existence of an Islamic government is mandatory in order to pass capital punishments on criminals, wherein an authorized judge takes into consideration all the evidence and thoroughly investigates and studies the case before sentencing a person to death, so also it is mandatory to have an authorized judge thoroughly investigate the charge of disbelief levelled against a person, record his statement, go through his past speeches and practices and examine the witnesses before deciding whether or not this person should be sentenced to spiritual death (declared a disbeliever) or is worthy of being excommunicated. In places where we don't have such a

system, where we don't have an authorized judge, nor can the conditions stipulated for excommunication be fulfilled, declaring someone to be a disbeliever and excommunicating him from Muslim society can turn out to be an act of error as much as it can be an act of justice. Accordingly, it is outside the scope of authority of individuals and unauthorized organizations, and the disastrous consequence it entails is no less than the consequences of maintaining the association of faithless people with Muslim societies.

Those individuals or groups who sincerely want to work towards the reformation of society should begin with understanding the mutual differences between various Muslim classes. One class is immersed in ignorance. Another class is sinful. The third class has fallen into the abyss of genuine disbelief. A fourth class is one that deserves to be excommunicated. All these classes cannot be treated alike.

Strive towards spreading the knowledge of deen among the ignorant. When they consider themselves Muslims, don't unnecessarily try to convince them that they are not. Instead, you should tell them that when you are already Muslims, consider yourselves Muslims and want to remain Muslims, then try to understand what Islam really is and follow it in all consciousness.

As for the sinful, make them fear God and try to reignite the spark of faith that is lying dormant in their hearts.

In those whom you observe genuine disbelief, do not insist on calling them disbelievers or announcing their disbelief. Rather, consider themselves fallen into the state of disbelief and invite them to faith. Try to introduce faith into their hearts by means of 'wisdom and beautiful preaching'. This is similar to the case wherein a doctor diagnoses tuberculosis in a patient. While it is necessary for the doctor to understand and recognize that the patient is

suffering from tuberculosis- for he can never treat the patient otherwise- it would be foolish of the doctor to tell the patient upfront that he is suffering from tuberculosis. This would not be a way to treat him but to rather kill him.[1]

As for those whom you consider deserve to be excommunicated, the proper attitude in their regard would be to refrain from issuing edicts of disbelief and excommunication against them, especially so in the absence of any Islamic court or establishment that is authorized to excommunicate such a person. You should be content at the Muslims themselves severing ties of love and fraternity, friendship and companionship with them. However, you should continue to meet them in order to bring them back to Islam.

Your practice regarding inter-marriages is founded on the same misconception that you have with regards the issue of excommunication. Now that we have already addresses that issue, this issue should also be considered resolved. However, I would reiterate by saying that declaring the entire contemporary Muslim society a single undifferentiated block and adopting the same strict stance while dealing with this entire society is a grave injustice and an un-Islamic act at that. You would find all kinds of people in this society- those who are true believers, pious and righteous, those who have signs of disbelief, and even those who deserve to be thrown out of the Muslim society but are still its members for want of an Islamic government to carry out this job. On what basis can you declare all of them alike and treat them all as People of the Book? To sever marital ties with those among them who are firm and pious believers just because they do not belong to your organization is nothing but prejudice. Islam has not allowed you to make such distinctions. As for those who are immersed in ignorance, or those who are sinful and impious

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[1] This article was written in 1945 when tuberculosis was a relatively fatal disease and a social taboo... Translator.

or involved in acts of disbelief, it is true that we should refrain from having marital ties with them... not because they are all disbelievers, but because we have been commanded to seek pious brides and grooms in marriage.

In all probability, your act of treating all those Muslims who do not belong to your Jamaat as 'People of the Book' stems from those aHadith that deal with being attached to the Jamaat, in which it is pointed out that there can be no Islamic life without collective life, and life outside the Jamaat is a life of ignorance. It is perhaps for the same reason that you consider even pious Muslims who do not belong to your Jamaat as inhabitants of hell and hence refrain from giving them your daughters in marriage, considering it as being prohibited upon you. If this is indeed your reasoning, then let me tell you that your reading is absolutely wrong. The '*Jamaat*' that has been given this exalted status in Hadith literature, not being a member of which takes one out of the pale of Islam, is '*alJamaat*' (*the* Jamaat), not any random Jamaat that a few Muslims come together and establish.

alJamaat refers to that organization which fulfils the following conditions:

1. It has been created for the sole purpose of establishing Islam; that exists for no other reason but to practically implement God's *deen* as a way of life.
2. One that has within its folds the overwhelming majority of Muslims.
3. Through which all those aspects of *deen* are being executed for which God desires the establishment of a Muslim nation on earth.

If such a Jamaat does exist, then dissociating from it would certainly lead to dissociation from Islam. The faith and Islam of such a person who is away from it or keeps away from it is not at all reliable or admissible. However, now that the Muslim nation has disintegrated and such a Jamaat no longer exists, none of those organizations that

are floated to compensate for the absence of *alJamaat* can be truly called *alJamaat* (in terms of the rights and authority it is entitled to) as per Islamic law until they actually attain the status of *alJamaat*. No matter how righteous you might be or how pure your intentions, Islamic law does not give you any right to float an organization with the help of a handful of men and then go on to declare that all the Muslims around the world who are not members of this organization of yours are disbelievers and that all such Muslims who have not pledged allegiance to your chief would die a death of ignorance... even if your ultimate goal and mission is the same as that of the prophets of God and your organizational principles are the same as that of an Islamic Jamaat. By adopting such an attitude you would be committing an act of transgression, and instead of bringing about any reform within the community you would only serve to add to the corruption therein. Think over it- why should you condemn a true and righteous Muslim as a disbeliever if does not become a part of your organization, not because of any arrogance or ego, but because he does not know about it or has certain reservations over it? And why should you alone have the right to form a Jamaat, and other Muslims not have similar rights? It is not necessary that there should be only one single organization that works towards the reformation of Muslims in such turbulent times. On the contrary, there can and do co-exist a multitude of such groups whose ends and means are both righteous. And there can and do exist plenty of such people who are unable to decide whether or not they should really be a part of any such organization, and if they do become a member of any of these, which organization they should opt for. In such a scenario, it would be an outright lie and a cause of discord if any particular organization were to lay exclusive claim of being *alJamaat*. Instead of making such claims, all organizations should continue to work in their own capacities and sincerely hope and pray for the re-establishment of the

alJamaat that existed during the blessed period of the Rightly Guided Caliphs. Every such organization should always be alert and cautious lest its own organizational setup creates hurdles in the formation of such an *alJamaat* instead of paving ways towards its establishment.

Tarjumanul Qur'an
(Zil Qadah & Zil Hajj 1364 AH/
November & December 1945)

Sugar-coated Poison

Just as the most dangerous of enmities are those that are done in the garb of friendship, so also the most hazardous misguidance is that which is dished out as guidance. While you can always be injured by an open enemy, you would certainly not be betrayed by him. Similarly, while you might get influenced by a person who is inviting you towards clear misguidance, you would at least not fall for the misunderstanding that what you are being made to enter is the true Islam. If a person were to openly refute Islam, attack the Qur'an, level allegations on the life of the Prophet ﷺ and falsify the creed, principles, injunctions and everything that is associated with Islam, a Muslim would either respond by rejecting his claims and stay firm upon Islam or he would forsake Islam and stop calling himself a Muslim. But how deceptive is the matter of that person who sits on the pulpit, opens the Qur'an and starts delivering a sermon, explains the meaning of the Qur'anic ayaat, invites people towards faith and good deeds, implores them to worship with all sincerity... and once you become convinced of him being a true guide and sincere preacher, he starts telling you that prayers* are obligatory upon you only thrice and not five times a day, that fasting all throughout Ramazan is not obligatory-rather it has been made obligatory only for three days or at the most ten and that there is no benchmark set for zakat and a person is free to offer as much charity as he wants. In this way, he continues to alter each and every injunction of Islam, all the while assuring you that this is exactly what the Qur'an enjoins upon us and this is the very example of the Prophet ﷺ. How difficult it is for poor innocent

Muslims to save themselves from this poison that has been offered to them mixed with sweets![1]

A Muslim Deputy Collector from UP who goes by the pen-name 'Haq Go' (Speaker of Truth) had recently proposed that eating pork should be made permissible in order to propagate Islam.[2] These days, he has started a series by the name "Mawaize Qur'an" (Qur'an Sermons) thorough which he seeks to misguide ordinary Muslims by means of the aforementioned strategy. His sermons are being published by a renowned organization of Hadith deniers based in Amritsar[3] in its monthly magazine.

Here, we would like to have a discussion over his third 'sermon', in which he has elaborated upon the ayaat,

فَوَيْلٌ لِّلْمُصَلِّينَ ۝ الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَن صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ ۝

'So woe to those who pray, (but) are heedless of their prayer.' *(Surah alMa'un ayaat 4-5)*

The speaker begins his sermon by saying that these ayaat admonish all future Muslim generations thus:

> *"Watch out! Don't you ever think that 'prayer' only means that you spread the prayer mat and do four sit-ups while uttering something from your mouth, whether or not you feel like praying, understand a word of what you are saying or what you are doing. Instead of giving you any benefit, such a prayer would be disadvantageous to you because it is offered only to show it off to others. Such a prayer is despised by God and angers Him...."*
>
> *"Do not treat prayers casually. There's a lot of responsibility attached to it. It is a time when God and*

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[1] The reader is requested to note that throughout this book, the word 'prayer' has been used to denote *salaat*, which is referred to as *namaz* in Urdu... Translator

[2] We have discussed this proposal in the first volume of this book. Readers are requested to go through it.

[3] After spoiling Amritsar, this organization has now shifted its base to Lahore.

His angels witness your actions. Would your heedlessness in prayers not annoy Him? The grandeur and greatness of God is proclaimed in prayers. You stand before him with your hands folded in humility. Just imagine how disrespectful it is to stand in such an exalted court and act in a manner that would be deemed sufficient to throw you out of the presence of even a worldly minister. How miserable of you to earn the wrath of God through your prayers instead of His rewards! Accordingly, there are four important preconditions for prayers: cutting yourself off from worldly activities, cleanliness of your body and clothes, understanding the words of the Qur'an and being a believer."

Behold! This is a Qur'an sermon that is being delivered by a 'Speaker of Truth' and being published in a magazine that claims to be a 'Propagation of Qur'anic teachings'. The opening lines are such that any Muslim who reads it would at once believe that it is intended at encouraging people to adopt sincerity in their prayers. All these things come together to put an innocent Muslim at ease with regards the speaker, there not being even an iota of apprehension in his mind that the sermon could lead him astray. In this way, when the person feels secure of all dangers of being misguided, he is further told in the same compassionate tone that:

"Such an environment when we can cut ourselves off from worldly activities is naturally available to us only thrice a day- when we rise up from our sleep, when we are preparing to go to sleep and when we return home in the evening after finishing off our day's work. Apart from these all the other times are those when we are either busy in our work, or asleep or indulging in play and amusement. It is a bit difficult to concentrate on our prayers at these times, making it even dangerous to do so. There is hardly anyone who can concentrate on his prayers at these hours. It is for this reason that

those who offer prayers at these times do so with utter disinterest and distraction."

After this, the readers are given one more dose of the sermon so that they do not turn averse to this invitation of going astray:

"Making bodily gestures is not the purpose of prayer. They only help a person to concentrate on his prayers with all sincerity. The actual prayer is the utterance of God's glorification, greatness, gratitude and praise and the recitation of the Qur'an, for which it is necessary that your heart and mind concur with each other and you are able focus on the prayer."

After having received this second dose, when the innocent Muslim again becomes reassured of not getting misguided, he is made to drink this last sip of poison:

"In my humble opinion, this ayat (wa yamna'oon alma'oon) alludes to those edicts that have no basis in the Qur'an but have become more important and worth obeying to us than the commands of the Qur'an itself. As a result of these, we are made to offer prayers at those times that go against our natural disposition, during which we are neither able to concentrate on our prayers nor able to perform any work that would benefit our lives."

The real intention of this entire sermon is nothing but to do away with the *zuhr* (noon) and *maghrib* (post-sunset) prayers. This is because the British government and these English companies have not given their Muslim employees any time to offer *zuhr* prayers, and the time for *maghrib* prayers unfortunately clashes with those that have been reserved for watching movies, enjoying oneself in clubs, playing tennis, billiards and cards. Our 'masters' do not approve of us leaving our games to offer prayers at these hours. This purpose has been elaborated upon by the learned speaker in the following words:

"Some of my friends, by the grace of God, are very punctual with their prayers. I have seen that in the

evenings they suddenly start offering their prayers in the middle of a tennis match or a round of bridge, or that they abruptly start offering prayers while having food at a party. There are some who are hearing a case in a court and the clock at once reminds them of the zuhr prayers, so they stand up and mechanically offer their prayers in the veranda. In my opinion, such a prayer is no prayer at all, making me shiver every time I am reminded of this ayat."

Now give it a thought.... There was one enemy who refused to let the Muslims pray during working hours and was unkind to them in this regard. Muslims were able to fight this enemy, which they did. Those who were sincere Muslims did not bow before the edicts of these tyrants. They preferred to abide by the commands of God and His messenger, many of them even losing their jobs in the bargain. Although those who were weaker in faith did succumb to job pressures and abandon their prayers, they have always been deeply regretful of this act of theirs. And then there was another enemy who began preaching against prayers, termed it worthless and a waste of time and tried its best to keep the Muslims away from it. Muslims were able to fight this enemy as well, which they did. This is because they were open enemies, making it easier for them to protect themselves from their attack. But how difficult it is to protect oneself from the conspiracies of an enemy who strives to achieve the goal of the very same aforementioned enemies, but uses sermons and discourses to meet his end instead of resorting to brute force or negative propaganda! He uses the Qur'an as a tool to convince Muslims that God has never made the *zuhr* and *maghrib* prayers mandatory upon you; it is the ignorant clerics who have forced you to bear the yoke of these prayers and it is they who are alluded to in the ayat, *wa yamna'oon alma'oon*. These tyrants have engaged you in prayers at those hours that go absolutely against human nature, as a result of which you were deprived of your jobs, your businesses, your entertainment

hubs and movies and you were thus made to forsake all avenues of progress and development. The Qur'an has never commanded you to offer such prayers. It only wants you to offer three prayers a day with the binding precondition that you should be able to leave off your worldly activities at those times and concentrate completely on those prayers.

This is that enmity that has been committed in the garb of friendship, the misguidance that has been masked with the attractive cloak of guidance. What open enemies could not achieve, those running false propaganda machines could not achieve, is now being achieved by these cunning 'friends' and 'reformers'. It is God alone who can now save innocent Muslims from these enemies.

At first glance, it would appear as if this sermon only attacks prayer timings. But scratch the surface and you would realize that this is just the beginning of a greater conspiracy. The prophetic command of five daily prayers has reached Muslims through almost the same continuous chain as the Qur'an. Just as our belief that the Qur'an has been guarded from all forms of corruption is based on fact that it has been directly heard by thousands of people from the Prophet ﷺ himself, by millions of people from the blessed companions, and every successive generation has since been receiving the Qur'an from its preceding generation in exactly the same words, so also we have no proof which leads us to believe in the authenticity of the command of five daily prayers greater than the fact that millions of people have heard this command from the Prophet ﷺ and have followed him in abiding by it for years together, after which generation after generation billions of Muslims have been hearing, seeing and abiding by the command that Islam has made it obligatory upon them to offer five prayers a day. This is an issue that has never been disputed upon despite all the sectarianism witnessed among Muslims. If anyone is driven to doubt the faith one has

regarding prayers because he is sceptical of the validity of this continuous chain of commands, then it is as much possible for his faith to dwindle out over the authenticity of the Qur'an, which is after all derived from the same continuous chain as the prayers are. Why, we can go a step ahead and argue that if such strong continuous chains can also be brought under the radar of doubt, then doubts can be raised over the genuineness of Muhammad's ﷺ claim to prophethood as well. I say this because the chain through which we have received the Prophet's ﷺ command of five daily prayers is the very chain that tells us about the commissioning of the Prophet. If we were to fall prey to this disease of doubting everything we come across to such an extent that we begin to doubt the authenticity of the command that makes prayers compulsory upon us, then it is quite probable that tomorrow we would begin doubting the prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ as well. God forbid!

It is the usual practice of those who invite towards evil that they do not reveal all their cards at once. They begin by attacking one of the established articles of faith and exhaust all their energies and resources in challenging that one single thing alone. This is a well thought of psychological trick. If they reveal all their intentions at once there would not be a single Muslim who would fall for their trap. Hence, they begin their work by injecting doubts and misgivings and weakening the foundations of any one article of faith. Those who stay firm and resist this initial attack are able to protect their religion and faith for life. But those weaker individuals who are unable to stand up to this assault become so overpowered by the very first attack that the shrewd enemy keeps attacking them- one article of faith after another- and the victim keeps following him until he turns completely astray.

It is but natural that when the heart of a person is infected with this disease of doubting things and he trusts less and doubts more, he is unable to withstand the deluge

of doubts. And when he once goes adrift, he keeps getting carried away with this deluge, with no opportunity to plant his feet firmly on the ground ever again. Denial of an authentic fact does not end with the denial of that particular fact alone. This first denial makes the person more confident and forthcoming in denying other authentic facts as well. This is because all those facts are based on the same foundation. When that foundation is shaken in one instance, the other facts are also rendered weak. At this point, it is within the power of the misguiding person to make his victim disbelieve in whatever fact he wishes to.

All the false sects that have arisen in Islam have realized their goals by adopting this very strategy. We have the Qadiyanis as a vivid example before us. Its founder also began by targeting one of the established articles of Islamic faith (seal of prophethood) and sowing doubts regarding it in the minds of people. Those who could save themselves from this initial assault were saved for life. But those whose foundation of faith was shattered in this particular matter became so vulnerable henceforth that the Mirza was able to make them refute whatever article of faith he wished to and make them affirm to whatever un-Islamic teachings he presented before them.

Just think over it, if a command as established as five daily prayers becomes a victim of doubt in some person's mind, then would his doubt end at this one command alone?

We have already been acquainted with all the details of the religion whose foundations Mr. 'Speaker of Truth' is busy laying upon reading his book 'Mutala Hadith' (Study of Hadith). Although this is not the most appropriate place to elaborate upon it[1], we would certainly like to ask this organization of Hadith deniers (that is promoting and publishing the views and ideologies of this gentleman within Muslims) if your enmity with aHadith has driven

[1] This has already been covered in the first volume of this book.

you to such a point that you are now up in arms against the Qur'an as well? Mr. 'Speaker of Truth' might be your partner in crime when it comes to the denial of Hadith, but the denial of five daily prayers is not just the denial of Hadith but the denial of the Qur'an as well.

Have you not read the following ayat in the Qur'an?

أَقِمِ الصَّلٰوةَ لِدُلُوكِ الشَّمْسِ

"Establish prayers at the decline of the sun...."
(Surah Bani Israil ayat 78)

In this ayat what would the phrase 'decline of the sun' allude to if not the time of *zuhr*?

And have you not read this ayat in the Qur'an?

وَأَقِمِ الصَّلٰوةَ طَرَفَيِ النَّهَارِ وَزُلَفًا مِّنَ الَّيْلِ

"And establish prayer at the two ends of the day and the approach of the night." *(Surah Hud ayat 114)*

Here, if 'two ends of the day' do not connote *fajr* and *maghrib*, what else do they mean?

How about this ayat?

وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ قَبْلَ طُلُوعِ الشَّمْسِ وَقَبْلَ غُرُوبِهَا ۚ وَمِنْ اٰنَآئِ الَّيْلِ فَسَبِّحْ وَأَطْرَافَ النَّهَارِ

"Glorify your Lord, praising Him before sunrise and before sunset, and in the periods of the night, and glorify Him at the ends of the day."
(Surah TaHa ayat 130)

Does this ayat not mention four different timings? 'Before sunrise' and one of the 'ends of the day' obviously means *fajr*. 'Before sunset' alludes to *asar*. 'Periods of the night' refers to *isha*. Apart from these times, can the second end of the day mean anything but *maghrib*?

Then we also have,

فَسُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ حِيْنَ تُمْسُوْنَ وَحِيْنَ تُصْبِحُوْنَ ﴿١٧﴾ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَعَشِيًّا وَّحِيْنَ تُظْهِرُوْنَ ﴿١٨﴾

"So glorify Allah when you reach the evening and when you reach the morning. And to Him is [due all] praise throughout the heavens and the earth. And (glorify Him) at night and when the day begins to decline." (Surah Rum ayat 17-18)

Does the phrase, 'reach the evening' mean anything other than *maghrib*? And does 'when the day begins to decline' signify any other time than *zuhr*?

If these ayaat indeed belong to the Qur'an and conclusively point towards all the five times of prayer, then can this sermon- that tries to convince Muslims that they need to offer prayers only thrice a day and that the Qur'an does not command them to offer the *zuhr* and *maghrib* prayers- be called a Qur'anic sermon?

Also, kindly ponder over the rational arguments presented by the speaker to convince his audience of discarding the *zuhr* and *maghrib* prayers. He avers that these are those times when man is unable to focus on his prayers, whereas being able to concentrate is a pre-condition for prayers, making these times absolutely against one's natural disposition. But it is the same 'Speaker of Truth' who accepts in his book, 'Mutala Hadith' that God has made it obligatory in the Qur'an to punctually offer prayers at their stated times when He says, اِنَّ الصَّلٰوةَ كَانَتْ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ كِتٰبًا مَّوْقُوْتًا ﴿١٠٣﴾ *"Prayer is enjoined upon the believers at stated times."* (Surah anNisa' ayat 103). Now, had he applied a little mind, he would have realized that the condition of being able to focus in prayers does not go hand in hand with offering it punctually at stated times. It is practically impossible to fulfil both these conditions together. If punctuality is taken as a condition then it would be compulsory to offer the prayer when its time arrives, regardless of whether someone is able to concentrate or not.

On the other hand, if concentration is to be taken as a prerequisite, then punctuality can never be achieved, for a man would then offer prayers only when he gets to wind up his work. If both these conditions are applied simultaneously, one of these would necessarily stand unmet.

It seems as if the 'Speaker of Truth' has adopted the stance of a myopic person by taking into consideration only his own free time and that of those people who belong to his class. Had he extended his vision to the daily schedule of all people in general, he would have realized that it is not just *zuhr* and *maghrib*, but all five times of prayer that would clash with his designated pre-condition of being able to leave off all distractions and focus on prayers alone. You claim that one can focus in the morning hours. But would a worker who is required to reach his workplace before dawn also be able to calmly focus in his *fajr* prayers? You presume that concentration can be achieved during *asar*. This might certainly be true for Deputy Collectors who call it a day at 4pm and return home. But can this time be conducive for a shopkeeper or hawker as well whose peak business hours begin in the late afternoon itself? You insist that a person is free of distractions during *isha*. It is quite possible that you are. But have you consulted the guard on night duty? Would he concur with you that *isha* is indeed the time when he can concentrate on his prayers? After all, prayers are not just meant to be offered by a particular individual or special class of individuals. Nor is it so that their timings have been laid down as per the daily routine of white collared officers! Rather, prayers are obligatory upon each and every soul, and there is not a single hour in the entire day about which it can be said that every person on earth would be able to offer his prayers at that particular hour with all focus and concentration.

Let alone all men, let us take the case of an individual. Can anyone claim that he is able to devote any single time of his day consistently throughout the year for focussed

prayers? Concentration is not required to abide by the clock. It is not that whenever the clock shows a particular time you would at once acquire concentration. It is possible that a person is usually able to focus on his prayers in the morning; but it is not necessary that it should always be so. In that case, your edict would require him to abandon his morning prayers on days that he is unable to focus in the morning. In the same vein, if the *asar* and *isha* prayers are also made dependent upon the condition of being able to concentrate therein, then it is quite likely that there would not be a single person who would be able to offer these prayers regularly. The speaker's edict would then have to accommodate this concession as well and state that if a person is able to concentrate in these hours he may offer his prayers, and if he is unable to focus he should abandon them. This is a necessary outcome of placing 'concentration' as a precondition to the offering of prayers. And abiding by this condition would necessarily mean that the other condition of punctuality is shown the door.

The question that arises is: From which ayat of the Qur'an has the learned *jurist* derived this ruling? Where in the Qur'an has it been mentioned that focus and concentration of the heart are a prerequisite for offering prayers?

It would not be proper to cite the first two ayaat of Surah alMu'minoon,

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ۝١ الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ ۝٢

"The believers have indeed attained true success; those who humble themselves in their prayers"

in support of this claim. This is because the word *khaashioon* used in this ayat does not mean those who are able to attain concentration, but those who humble themselves before God and regard themselves as insignificant, weak and helpless in His presence, the composure of their body organs testifying to this state of submission. This can be attained without focus and

concentration as well. If a person believes deep in his heart that he is helpless and insignificant before God, and stands up to prayer immersed in this faith, folds his hands, bows down and prostrates on the ground, then he would by all means be included in the list of *khashioon*, regardless of whether he is able to free himself from his worldly activities or not.

To derive this ruling from the 43rd ayat of Surah Nisa' would also be misplaced. This ayat says that, لَا تَقْرَبُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاَنْتُمْ سُكٰرٰى حَتّٰى تَعْلَمُوْا مَا تَقُوْلُوْنَ *"Believers! Do not approach prayer while you are intoxicated, until you know what you are saying"*. The 'Speaker of Truth' infers that when alcohol was not prohibited, offering prayers in an inebriated state was disallowed, because a person is unable to concentrate when he is drunk. This, however, is a wrong inference. Alcohol, on the contrary, increases the concentration levels of a person. How can the Author of the Qur'an say something as baseless? He has Himself offered the reason behind the prohibition by stating that you are unable to have control over yourself while being inebriated. You tend to utter things without your mind realizing what you are saying. Hence, do not approach prayers in such a state. Offer prayers only when you know what you are saying.

There are no two opinions on the issue that it is always better to offer prayers with utmost concentration. The more the presence of heart and mind and focus towards God, the more would the prayer be complete and acceptable before God. But it is one thing to be a means of perfection and quite another to be a compulsory precondition. A prayer would be considered done if its stated components are duly offered during its stated time with a faithful heart, regardless of whether it is deemed perfect or not. This is the reason why we are obligated to perform the act of prayer and not obligated to make it perfect. If we refuse to stay content at fulfilling only what is obligatory upon us and sincerely strive to reach perfection, then this would be

counted as the best grade of prayer, entitling us to additional rewards. But attaining this grade has not been made obligatory upon us. Such an obligation would have rendered Islam a religion that could be followed only by a few perfect worshippers, depriving the common Muslims who are unable to attain this perfection of Islam altogether. Hence, although the Qur'an lays a lot of emphasis on the obligation of prayer, it does not set the 'concentration of the heart' and 'getting oneself free from worldly distractions' as prerequisites for the same.

The 'Speaker of Truth' has equated the Islamic prayer with the worship of monks and the meditation of sages. This is why he considers concentrating in the prayer an inherent part thereof, drawing from the Christian and Brahmin forms of worship. However, in Islam, prayers are not for those who have renounced the world, but for those who have been commanded to get involved in worldly matters, satisfy all their natural desires and shoulder all the responsibilities of this life. Had the 'Speaker of Truth' contemplated a bit harder and attempted to understand the spirit of Islam and the rational foundations of this system, he would have known that this faith does not separate religion from the material world. Rather, it wishes to reform our worldly life in such a way that our worldly life itself becomes our religious life. It has not placed the path to salvation outside the premises of this world. It paves a straight path right from the middle of worldly pursuits and tells us that it is this path that would lead you to Paradise. Its basic motive is to make man pursue all worldly activities in complete confirmation with *deen*, while reminding him that his true lord is God, it is His commands that you are obliged to obey, He is aware of all your open and hidden acts and He would one day hold you accountable for all the deeds you have performed in this life. If you obey Him in this world and abide by His laws in all your affairs, you would be granted His good pleasure; and if you fail to do so, you would be subjected to His

wrath. The rationale behind making prayers obligatory is to remind people of this very lesson in each and every prayer. To meet this purpose, such hours have been selected when the revision of this lesson is most required.

As soon as you open the first page of the Qur'an, you are met with these ayaat:

ذٰلِكَ الْكِتٰبُ لَا رَيْبَ ۛ فِيْهِ ۛ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ۝ الَّذِيْنَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَ يُقِيْمُوْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ يُنْفِقُوْنَ ۝ وَالَّذِيْنَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ ۚ وَبِالْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوْقِنُوْنَ ۝

"This is the book of God, there is no doubt about it; it is a guidance for the pious, for those who believe in the unseen, who establish prayer and spend out of what We have provided them, who believe in what has been revealed to you and what was revealed before you, and have firm faith in the hereafter."

[Surah alBaqarah ayaat 2-4]

Ponder over these ayaat. The guidance of the Qur'an is nothing other than that it shows man the right path of ideology and practice in this world, enlightens him with knowledge, sets straight his perspective and shows him that path that allows him to safely avoid the deviating byroads of worldly life and leads him to eternal success. But this path can open up only for that person and would prove effortless for that person alone who believes in the unseen, has faith in God, is convinced of the Day of Judgment, offers prayers and offers charity from that wealth that he holds dear with the sole intention of pleasing God. He who fulfils these conditions would be able to follow the path of life laid down by the Qur'an and it is he alone who would attain success, because these ayaat are followed by the ayat, "Such are on true guidance from their Lord; such are the truly successful."

We can understand the importance of prayer from this passage.

Prayers make conviction in the unseen deep rooted. It is nothing but his faith in an unseen God that makes a person forsake his comfort, his work and his means of profit several times a day to offer prayers, and drags him to the masjid or the prayer-mat over and over again. As a result of this regular refreshment of faith and the corresponding actions of body parts, the influence of faith on the soul keeps getting stronger and reaches a point where the person's character gets moulded in such a way that his life becomes a personification of faith itself. Prayer is, in fact, the only act of worship wherein a person reiterates his commitment to the Islamic creed by means of his words and deeds. Everything from the initial *takbeer* to the *salaam* is a reiteration of this creed. Belief in God, on His messenger, on His books, on His Day of Judgment, accepting Him as the True Lord, seeking His good pleasure, having fear of being accountable before Him, realizing that He is Omniscient... each of these is a part of prayer. Even if a person is not actively conscious of it, all these points are definitely present in the subconscious of a person who is regular in his prayers, for these are the very points that make it him regular in prayers in the first place.

When, as a result of such oft-repeated reminders, this act strengthens the Islamic ideology in the minds of people and makes it habitual for the body to abide by it, then it necessarily follows that man gets practically trained in abiding by God's commands as well. It creates in him a sense of responsibility. It develops in him the ability to adopt the discipline taught by Islam in all walks of life. There's a person who forsakes the sweet comfort of sleep in the morning to offer his *fajr* prayers for the only reason that God has commanded him to do so, who suspends his business activities everyday during *zuhr* and *asar* to rush towards the masjid for the sole reason that his unseen God is calling him, always sacrifices his leisurely hours in the evening to offer his *maghrib* prayers for no other reason than that God has made it obligatory upon him to do so and

turns towards God every night for *isha* instead of turning towards sinful activities just because he considers it his duty to obey God. It is but obvious that such a person can be expected to, and it can be expected only from such a person that when he would complete his prayers and step into the practical world, the fear of the same Omniscient God would keep him away from indulging in open and hidden sins, make him refrain from committing acts of injustice and transgression, encourage him to abide by God's commands and laws, and develop so much strength in him that neither would the desire of luxury come in his way of fulfilling his responsibilities, nor would the lust of worldly profits make him transgress due limits or the enjoyments of the world make him negligent of God. Even if he is unable to attain this level of piety through his prayers, at least his sense of responsibility, spirit of obedience and his yearning for God's pleasure would far surpass that of a person who listens to God's call but does not move an inch. He would be exceedingly better than a person who has never been accustomed to give preference to God over his material pursuits, wouldn't he?

The spiritual benefits of offering prayers with a focussed mind and complete concentration can never be overemphasized. But the purpose for which God has made prayers obligatory upon us can be achieved even without such concentration, provided we perform them at their stated times. This is why the Qur'an stresses upon punctuality in prayers instead of focus and concentration therein. Also, the prayers that are offered in the calm and comfortable ambiance of the darkest hours of the night are not given as much importance as those that are offered during the busy hours of the day. God says, حٰفِظُوْا عَلَى الصَّلَوٰتِ وَالصَّلٰوةِ الْوُسْطٰى *"Be watchful over the prayers and over praying with the utmost excellence"* [Surah alBaqarah ayat 238]. The phrase, *al-salaat al-wusta* used here is usually understood to be the *asar* prayers, and we have quite a few aHadith

that concur with the same. The additional importance given to this particular prayer is because this is the time when people are usually quite busy. This exclusivity clearly shows that more than your focus and concentration, God is interested in your gesture of leaving aside your activities, interests and business and leaping towards Him as soon as you listen to His call to obey His command, preferring it over everything else.

This is why the command for Friday prayers has been given in the following words:

إِذَا نُودِيَ لِلصَّلَوٰةِ مِن يَوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ فَاسْعَوْا إِلَىٰ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَذَرُوا الْبَيْعَ ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٩﴾ فَإِذَا قُضِيَتِ الصَّلَوٰةُ فَانتَشِرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَابْتَغُوا مِن فَضْلِ اللَّهِ

"Believers, when the call for prayer is made on Friday, hasten to the remembrance of Allah and give up all trading. That is better for you, if you only knew. But when the prayer has been concluded, disperse in the land and seek Allah's bounty."

(Surah alJumu'ah ayaat 9-10)

You contend that the prayers offered during the busy hours of the day lack presence of mind. The mind remains attached to worldly engagements or sports and games. One cannot focus on God. Some words are uttered from the mouth without understanding what is being said and the body is made to undergo some involuntary exercises. We, on the other hand, aver that it is this prayer that holds value. A person who has so much interest in his business or his game that his mind remains engrossed in those activities even when he walks away from them actually makes a great sacrifice for his Lord by remembering His commands even in the midst of his interests and leaving them behind to rush towards the masjid as a mark of submission and obedience. How good a slave is he who diverts his focus from the work he enjoys and is engrossed in and turns towards God, forcing his heart to remember Him,

regardless of whether it feels like doing so or not! Do you have no value for this sacrifice, this obedience and this sense of responsibility? Has this person not passed his Lord's trial with flying colours? Has he not offered a valid proof of his self-control and piety? Has he not proved by his act that he is able to sacrifice his interests in the line of duty? But for these religious and moral qualities that he possesses, there was nothing that made him forsake his economic and leisurely activities and draw him towards prayers. Is there anything other than the fear of God and the sense of obedience he nurtures in his heart that made him do so?

It is quite unfortunate that such important Islamic matters are being undermined today by self-assuming people, who neither have the intellectual or academic calibre to understand the basics of *deen*, let alone its details, nor do they have any fear of God, nor do they have any ethics. Had they had any fear of God, they would not have shouldered the burden of spoiling the faith and deeds of thousands of Muslims by publishing their surface and ignorant ideas related to issues related to *deen*. Their ethical deprivation is evident from the fact that they are not ready to abandon their false claims of knowledge and insight and garner courage to ask those who have sufficient knowledge and understanding of these matters. How terrible it is for Muslims that such incompetent people have developed the audacity to guide them on their religious and worldly matters!

Tarjumanul Qur'an
(Rabi ul akhir-Jamaadi ul ula 1354 AH/
July-August 1935 CE)

Why are our Prayers Ineffectual?

After the publication of the previous article, we received a letter that read:

"As far as prayer timings are concerned, you have refuted the arguments of the 'Speaker of Truth' in such a convincing manner that it leaves no room for any further discussion. But there's one doubt that I'm unable to find an answer to. You have elaborated upon the effects of prayer on the practical life of a person, how prayers train a person to abide by God's commands, imbibe in him a sense of responsibility and make him capable of confirming with the discipline of Islam in all walks of life. From a theoretical perspective, I do agree that prayers, and all other Islamic forms of worship for that matter, have been prescribed for the sole purpose of influencing the practical life of a person, and the manner in which they have been prescribed are such that they should indeed mould the character and morals of a person in the intended manner. What is the reason, then, that we fail to see this influence on the practical lives of Muslims? What ought to have been the case is that those who are observant of their prayers, fasts, Hajj and zakaat (obligatory charity) should have been the shining examples of Islamic character and values, and a personification of truth, honesty, piety and purity. But what we observe in our society today is just the opposite. We do not find the character and dealings of such people any different from those who do not pray or fast or perform Hajj or give charity. Rather, what we do notice is that there are many worshipers who have made their acts of worship a shield against their

dishonesty, and their misdeeds have only served to distance many young educated people away from prayers and fasting."

Reply:

The doubt raised by the gentleman in this letter is quite common among many people these days, and it cannot be denied that it is not totally unfounded either. But it can nevertheless be solved quite easily. The writer has himself agreed to the fact that Islamic acts of worship are perfect in theory. He is convinced that the purpose for which these acts of worship are prescribed ought to be fulfilled by the manner in which they have been prescribed, there being no better way of making a person turn towards God or making him accustomed to the obedience of His commands. History is witness to the fact that this theory has been successfully put into practice over and over again. These very prayers and fasts and Hajj and charity had accelerated the moral and spiritual grooming of millions of early Muslims to make them confirm to Islamic standards and had had the intended effects on their character. If today we fail to see these effects on the practical life of an individual or group of individuals, we should try to investigate into the reasons why people today have become immune to the influence of these acts of worship, instead of being sceptical over the inherent effect of that act of worship itself. We know for sure that fire burns down wood. Our observation and experience in this regard have conclusively proved that it is the nature of fire to burn and that of wood to get burned down. But if we were to observe at any given instance that a piece of wood placed on a fire refuses to burn down, we would never say that fire has lost its ability to burn things. Rather, we would assume that the wood must probably be damp, making *it* incapable of catching fire. Similarly, we know for sure that the prescribed form of grooming and training ought to have a specific effect on a person, that it is within its very nature to have that effect,

and our repeated observations and experiences over the years tell us that across times and circumstances, it has indeed had that effect on people. Having known this, if we then fail to see its effects being manifested on certain individuals, there is no reason why we should harbour any doubt about the inherent nature and competence of this method. We should instead conclude that such individuals are themselves incapable of getting influenced, just as damp wood becomes incapable of getting affected by fire.

As far as the apparent form of prayer is concerned, it is limited to the repetition of a few bodily movements and utterances at some specific hours. The same holds true for all other acts of worship. To refrain from eating, drinking and indulging in sexual relations for a specific month from dawn to dusk is called fasting. To offer a specific amount of money from your wealth as charity towards specific causes once every year is called *zakaat*. To travel to the land of Hijaz in a specific period and conduct some specific rituals at specific spots is termed as Hajj. It is but obvious that there is nothing in these very actions per se that would have an effect on any person. If seen from the material perspective, there is no difference between prayers and exercise, fasting and being hungry, *zakaat* and tax, and between Hajj and any other journey. No sane person would ever assume that a bodily exercise leads to refinement of the soul, or that being hungry improves our character, or that paying tax or travelling somewhere cultivates superior qualities in a person....

But what makes these acts distinct from all other actions, and makes them a wonderful means of achieving high moral character and purification of the soul is nothing but faith. It is faith that turns bowing and prostrating and standing and sitting into prayer. It is faith that converts hunger into fasting, and brings about a revolution in the concepts of taxation and travel to raise them to the exalted positions of *zakaat* and Hajj. Faith is the actual spirit that dwells in these actions. It is faith that gives meaning to

these acts of worship and makes them effective. It is because of faith that the soul becomes capable of getting influenced by these acts of worship.

Now it is obvious that if a person truly believes in God, has faith in the hereafter, regards Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as the messenger of God and considers his teachings as God's guidance, it is impossible that his heart would remain absolutely unaffected by the lessons revised during prayers, despite offering them five times a day, or that there would be no sign of the fear of God or the obedience to His commands in his daily life. It is not conceivable that he receives training on self-control and piety under strict conditions for an entire month every year and yet there is no revolution in his life whatsoever, remaining as blank as when he began; or that on the basis of his faith in the unseen, he keeps sacrificing his hard earned wealth every year, but he remains as niggardly, hard-hearted, corrupt and selfish as any self-centred disbeliever. It is equally difficult to imagine that a person responds to his Lord's call with *labbaik labbaik* (Here I am) by putting on the pilgrim garb, leaves behind his house and business and abandons his activities of interest to journey to a distant land while remaining engrossed in the bliss of God's love, reaches the centre of Islam and witnesses with his own eyes those glorious signs of God that testify to the honourable status of His obedient servants and the hopelessness of transgressors, but yet when he returns home, his character remains untouched by the effects and results of this journey, as if he had never been anywhere or witnessed anything.

It is true that the effects these acts of worship have on different individuals may vary in terms of quality and quantity. It has a lot to do with the capabilities of the person concerned and the strength of his faith. The effects would be more pronounced and deeper on a person possessing more capabilities and stronger faith, while they would be weaker and shallower on a person who does not have as much capability or whose faith is quite frail.

However, it is not at all possible that the worship that is performed with a faithful heart would turn out to be entirely ineffective. We can confidently say that the person who combines prayers with profanities and sins, whose life contains both fasting as well as inequity, whose dealings involve corruption and yet he offers *zakaat*, and who is mixing up Hajj with prohibited acts is not actually offering prayers, fasts, *zakaat* or Hajj. His prayer is just a habitual exercise, his fasts are simply periods of hunger, his *zakaat* is nothing more than a tax and his Hajj does not go beyond a journey that he could might as well had to Paris or London.

This I have said keeping in mind only those people whose lives and characters, according to the writer, show no effects of these acts of worship. However, I just cannot concur with the view that this applies to all those Muslims who offer prayers, observe fasts, pay *zakaat* and perform Hajj. It is quite possible that a minuscule minority of such hypocrites does exist, but the overwhelming majority of Muslims are certainly not such. The disease that is plaguing the vast majority of Muslims is not hypocrisy; rather, it is weakness of faith. It is because their faith is weak that the effects of their acts of worship have also become weak. They keep offering prayers, observe fasts, pay *zakaat* and even perform Hajj; but these acts superficially touch their souls and wane off, just like the mist that covers a mirror for a few minutes before it clears off. This is not the absence of any effect, but the weakness thereof. The spark of faith is hidden deep within the heart, and its warmth is nevertheless making prayers somewhat effective; but these effects are so light that their signs are not very obvious on the lives and characters of these worshippers.

I also express my dissent over the assumption that the state of those Muslims who engage in regular worship is worse or similar to that of those who do not do so. In fact, if we were to observe our community as a whole, we would realize that even today, the state of those who are regular

with their prayers and fasts is much better than that of those who aren't. But our eyes tend to ignore the misdeeds of people who have forsaken God and concentrate on the sins of worshippers instead. This is because the dishonesty and foul character of a person who does not offer prayers or observe fasts does not seem to be as serious a concern as that of a person who is regular in his worship. It is naturally expected of a non-worshipper to indulge in acts of evil, making people ignore his sinful deeds. On the contrary, it is expected of a worshiper that he would be pious and God-fearing. Hence, when he fails to live up to these expectations and commits a sin, it gets noticed by every person and every tongue lashes out against it. This is similar to a black stain on a white-washed wall that everyone finds detestable, but no one would have any problem if an already black furnace wall is smeared with charcoal.

If we refrain from unnecessary exaggerations, the truth of the matter is nothing more than that there is a sizable Muslim population that offers prayers, observes fasts and performs Hajj but is not obtaining all the benefits of self-purification that these acts of worship have to offer. This is happening because faith, which is the very spirit of these acts of worship and the fuel that makes them effective, has dwindled down in their hearts.

Faith, in turn, has got weakened because of our distance from the Qur'an and its teachings. God had made this very Qur'an the means to call others towards faith. But today, the common Muslim man is himself deprived of its understanding and oblivious of its message. How then would faith grow in his heart?

One more reason why our prayers are not affecting us to their full potential is the false distinction between *deen* and the world that we have assumed in our minds. This was actually a notion from the times of ignorance which Islam had completely eradicated. But it has now found a way amongst Muslims as well. During pre-Islamic times, people

used to think that religion is just one of the many components of human life, and that it has no relation with other fellow components. Religious rites, acts of worship and sacrifices were assumed to have no other purpose than to please the gods, so as to obtain their support in their life's affairs. Once man used to step out of the temple after completing those rituals, he did not consider himself under any religious obligation and was free to conduct his worldly affairs however he wished. Islam did away with these unjust limitations. It conferred *deen* with the status of a complete system of life instead of merely being one of life's many departments. It forged a deep relationship between belief and morals, faith and character, worship and dealings, and between all religious and worldly deeds, thus making man's entire worldly life his religious life as well. It stated that *deen* is not an entity that is at variance with worldly affairs; rather, *deen* is the observance of God's limits, the obedience of His laws and the pursuit of His pleasure in this worldly life itself. Worship and dealings are not two mutually exclusive things. Rather, making our dealings abide by the limits God has ordained, and to seek through it divine pleasure and closeness is itself worship. The purpose of declaring prayers, fasts, *zakaat* and Hajj as obligatory acts of worship is not in the least to limit worship to these acts alone. Rather, these serve to prepare man for the greater form of worship that encompasses all aspects of his life. The entire universe is the chapel of a Muslim. His entire life is an act of worship. He should be engrossed in his Lord's worship every single moment. His deity is not confined to his masjid alone. Rather, the masjid is his training ground where he develops the ability to worship. If the relationship of his prayers, fasts and all other acts of worship is severed from his dealings and he becomes independent of divine restrictions in all matters of his life, then let me tell you that in such a case he cannot become an adherent of *deen* or a true worshipper even if he is regular with his prayers and fasts.

It is quite unfortunate that this concept of deen is slowly withering away from the minds of Muslims and it is being replaced by the same ignorant idea of bifurcation between *deen* and worldly affairs that Islam had long abolished. It is the result of this faulted concept that the mutual relationship between worship and dealings has got severed, prayers have lost touch from practical life, financial matters have escaped the purview of *zakaat*, eleven months of the year have become independent of the influence of Ramazan and even the blessed month of Ramazan has been relegated to a lock upon one's throat, and Hajj has become no different from the *yatras* and pilgrimages of Hindus and Christians. The final outcome was this widespread misunderstanding that has found ample ground in people's mind that prayers and profanities, fasts and inequity, *zakaat* and dishonesty, and Hajj and indulgence in prohibited entities can peacefully coexist!

Tarjumanul Qur'an
(Shaban 1354 AH/ November 1935 CE)

Opposition of Hadith Deniers to the Practice of Sacrifice

Last year, an organization from Punjab had circulated a pamphlet on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha in which sacrifice of animals was termed as irrelevant, meaningless, useless and even a harmful and unsafe practice, and Muslims were advised to discontinue this 'alleged *Sunnah* of the barren land'. They were told that instead of wasting money on sacrificial animals, they should spend the same money to fund community centres, to look into the welfare of orphans and widows and to provide employment opportunities to the unemployed. It was later known that keeping Muslims away from the act of sacrifice had become a regular part of this organization's propagation campaign and it is repeated every year on Eid-ul-Azha. We cannot say how successful they have been in achieving their purpose, but looking at the scale and means employed in this propaganda and the state of collective consciousness of today's Muslims, it can very well be assumed that thousands of Muslims might have fallen for their deceit, and if it is not countered, many more would fall prey in the future. Hence, as Eid-ul-Azha approaches, we consider it necessary to refute the misunderstandings that are being spread by these people.[1]

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[1] This article was written in Zil Qadah 1355 AH. However, it is quite unfortunate that this organization has not yet ceased its propaganda. In 1368, it came to our notice that this organization has again tried to influence the masses into believing that sacrifice is a custom innovated by '*maulvis*'. Please note that this is the same organization that has been referred to in the Chapter 'Sugar-coated Poison'.

From the pamphlet we have received, we understand that this organization is opposed to the act of sacrifice for three reasons:

1. In their view, sacrifice is a custom belonging to the pre-Islamic days of ignorance which has been declared as an Islamic practice by ignorant '*maulvis*'. One of their writers presents his study regarding sacrifice in the following words: 'The custom of sacrifice had been in vogue in all the savage and civilized communities of the world. But today, no one practices it except Muslims.'
2. They feel that it hurts the economy. They are of the opinion that the money spent in sacrificing goats is completely wasted. There is no intellectual or material gain associated with it.
3. They could not find any mention of this command in the Qur'an. As for the aHadith, it is most convenient for them to reject them. To think of it, the basic purpose of adopting an ideology that rejects aHadith is to easily declare all those commandments that other communities object to or they themselves cannot understand as being out of the pale of Islam.

These objections have been raised by those gentlemen who call themselves Muslims and consider the Qur'an to be the final authority. Hence, we would now state the commandments of sacrifice and explain the reasons why God has included the act of sacrifice in the list of special forms of worship from the Qur'an itself.

The rulings pertaining to sacrifice that have been mentioned in the Qur'an can be classified into three categories:

1. One form of sacrifice is an integral part of the rites of Hajj. We find its mention in Surah alHajj's 26^{th}, 27^{th} and 28^{th} ayaat:

وَإِذْ بَوَّأْنَا لِإِبْرٰهِيمَ مَكَانَ الْبَيْتِ ..... وَأَذِّنْ فِي النَّاسِ بِالْحَجِّ يَأْتُوكَ رِجَالًا وَّعَلٰى كُلِّ ضَامِرٍ يَّأْتِينَ مِنْ كُلِّ فَجٍّ عَمِيقٍ ﴿٢٧﴾ لِّيَشْهَدُوا مَنَافِعَ لَهُمْ وَيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللّٰهِ فِيٓ أَيَّامٍ مَّعْلُومٰتٍ عَلٰى مَا رَزَقَهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَهِيمَةِ الْأَنْعَامِ ۚ فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا وَأَطْعِمُوا الْبَآئِسَ الْفَقِيرَ ﴿٢٨﴾

"Call to mind when We assigned to Abraham the site of the House (Ka'abah), directing him... "and publicly proclaim pilgrimage for all mankind so that they may come to you on foot and mounted on lean camels from every distant point to witness the benefits in store for them, and pronounce the name of Allah during the appointed days over the cattle that He has provided them. So eat of it and feed the distressed and the needy."

As is evident from the above passage, the commandment of Hajj was issued to Abraham during the construction of the Ka'abah itself and the stated purpose was that people might come there and acquire the benefits of the two worlds and sacrifice animals in the name of God. The same obligation and rites were passed on to the *Ummah* of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, they being the inheritors of Abraham's legacy. وَلِلّٰهِ عَلَى النَّاسِ حِجُّ الْبَيْتِ مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلًا *"Pilgrimage to the House is a duty owed to Allah by all those who can make their way to it."* (Surah Al-e-Imran ayat 97). And sacrifice is as much a part of the rites of pilgrimage for the Ummah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as it was for the *Ummah* of Prophet Abraham (Peace by upon him). Accordingly, the *Ummah* of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ has been addressed in the 5th *ruku* (section) of Surah alHajj, wherein it is stated that:

وَالْبُدْنَ جَعَلْنٰهَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ شَعَآئِرِ اللّٰهِ لَكُمْ فِيْهَا خَيْرٌ فَاذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهَا صَوَآفَّ فَاِذَا وَجَبَتْ جُنُوْبُهَا فَكُلُوْا مِنْهَا وَاَطْعِمُوا الْقَانِعَ وَالْمُعْتَرَّ

"We have appointed sacrificial camels among the symbols of (devotion to) Allah. There is much good in them for you. So make them stand (at the time of sacrifice) and pronounce the name of Allah over them, and when they fall down on their sides (after they are slaughtered), eat and also feed them who do not ask and those who ask." (Surah alHajj:36)

2. The second form of sacrifice is that which is offered in lieu of *tamattau** and *qiran*, or when one is prevented from entering the *Haram* premises or as expiation for some forbidden act that was committed during the pilgrimage.

We enumerate its rulings here:

وَاَتِمُّوا الْحَجَّ وَالْعُمْرَةَ لِلّٰهِ فَاِنْ اُحْصِرْتُمْ فَمَا اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ وَلَا تَحْلِقُوْا رُءُوْسَكُمْ حَتّٰى يَبْلُغَ الْهَدْيُ مَحِلَّهٗ

"When you make up your mind to perform Hajj and Umrah, accomplish these to please Allah. But if you are hemmed in somewhere, then offer to Allah whatever sacrifice you can afford. And do not shave your heads until the sacrifice reaches its place."
(Surah alBaqarah ayat 196)

فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَّرِيْضًا اَوْ بِهٖٓ اَذًى مِّنْ رَّاْسِهٖ فَفِدْيَةٌ مِّنْ صِيَامٍ اَوْ صَدَقَةٍ اَوْ نُسُكٍ

"But whoever among you is sick or has an ailment of the head and has his head shaved shall atone for this either by fasting or by alms-giving or by offering a sacrifice. (Surah alBaqarah ayat 196)

فَمَنْ تَمَتَّعَ بِالْعُمْرَةِ اِلَى الْحَجِّ فَمَا اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ فَمَنْ لَّمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ ثَلٰثَةِ اَيَّامٍ فِى الْحَجِّ وَسَبْعَةٍ اِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ

"However, when you are secure (and you reach Makkah before the Hajj season begins), whoever takes advantage[1] of this opportunity to perform Umrah shall offer the sacrifice that he can afford. But if he cannot afford a sacrifice, he shall fast for three days during the Hajj season and seven days after reaching home, that is, ten days in all." *(Surah alBaqarah ayat 196)*

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ لَا تَقْتُلُوا۟ ٱلصَّيْدَ وَأَنتُمْ حُرُمٌ ۚ وَمَن قَتَلَهُۥ مِنكُم مُّتَعَمِّدًا

فَجَزَآءٌ مِّثْلُ مَا قَتَلَ مِنَ ٱلنَّعَمِ يَحْكُمُ بِهِۦ ذَوَا عَدْلٍ مِّنكُمْ هَدْيًۢا بَٰلِغَ ٱلْكَعْبَةِ

"Believers! Do not kill game while you are in the state of pilgrim sanctity. Whoever of you kills it willfully there shall be a recompense, the like of what he has killed, in cattle- as shall be judged by two men of equity among you- to be brought to the Ka'abah as an offering." *(Surah alMaidah ayat 95)*

In these ayaat, the term used for the sacrificial animals is '*hadi*'. While expounding upon the literal meaning of this word, Imam Razi had written that 'Hadi refers to a thing that is taken to the house of God as a present in order to gain His nearness, just as men send gifts to other men in order to gain their closeness.' Taking cue from this definition, the deniers of sacrifice did not think twice before ruling that *hadi* refers to any present that is taken to God, and not sacrificial animals per se. However, Imam Razi has further added that:

"The interpretation of the ayat is that until the hadi does not reach its place and is duly slaughtered, one should not shave his head. He should shave his head only after it has been slaughtered."

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[1] This refers to the practice wherein a person performs Umrah upon reaching Makkah a few days before the commencement of Hajj. He then takes off his pilgrim garb and frees himself of all those restrictions that are associated with the sanctity of the garb (ehram). He then wears the garb again when the Hajj begins. In this manner, the benefit that he gains by putting off the garb and its restrictions after performing Umrah calls for a sacrifice as a token of gratitude.

But since this interpretation did not suit their taste, the 'Islamic research scholars of the modern age' chose to ignore it. And why would they give any credence to Imam Razi's interpretation of the Qur'an when they could not find even the words of God acceptable when He elaborates the Surah alMaidah clause, 'to be brought to the Ka'abah as an offering' with 'a recompense, the like of what he has killed, in cattle'? This ayat makes the meaning of the word *hadi* absolutely clear that wherever this word appears in the Qur'an it stands for a sacrificial offering and nothing else.

3. The third form of sacrifice is the one that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ has been commanded to perform, and through him are addressed the Muslims in general.

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٦٢﴾ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ
وَبِذَٰلِكَ أُمِرْتُ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ﴿١٦٣﴾

"Say, surely my prayer, my rites of sacrifice, my living and my dying are for Allah, Lord of the worlds. No partner has He; and this I have been commanded, and I am the first (among you) of the Muslims."

(Surah alAn'am ayaat 162-163)

In the above ayaat, the word following salaat (prayer) is *nusuk* which means both- an act of worship and obedience as well as sacrifice. The Qur'an usually employs this word in the latter context. For instance, in Surah alHajj, we have:

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ جَعَلْنَا مَنسَكًا لِّيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَىٰ مَا رَزَقَهُم مِّن بَهِيمَةِ الْأَنْعَامِ

"For every people we have laid down a ritual of sacrifice that they pronounce the name of Allah over the cattle He has provided them."

(Surah alHajj ayat 34)

Again, in Surah alBaqarah, we have:

فَفِدْيَةٌ مِّنْ صِيَامٍ أَوْ صَدَقَةٍ أَوْ نُسُكٍ

"...shall atone for this either by fasting or alms-giving or by offering a sacrifice." (Surah alBaqarah ayat 196)

These ayaat make it clear what the Qur'an means when it says *nusuk.* Having said that, let us go back to the ayaat under study and note that the clause, 'and this I have been commanded' covers both- *salaat* and *nusuk* equally. After this, it has been said, "I am the first of the Muslims", which makes it clear that this command is not to be obeyed exclusively by the Prophet, but it is addressed to all Muslims. It is on this basis that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ has strictly instructed all obedient Muslims to offer sacrifice.

We read in a Hadith that *"He who does not offer sacrifice, despite being capable of doing so should not even approach our Eid grounds".*

In another Hadith, it is said, *"Our first act of worship this day (of Eid ul Adha) is prayer, and the next is sacrifice."*

Also, *"He who offers his (Eid ul Adha) prayer with us should offer sacrifice after the prayer".*

These are the clear commands of the Qur'an related to sacrifice which leave no room for any doubt or ambiguous interpretation. It is ironical that those who claim to be the foremost followers of the Qur'an resort to writing such things as:

> *"The custom of sacrifice had been in vogue in all the savage and civilized communities of the world. But today, no one practices it except Muslims."*
>
> *"How on earth does it become incumbent upon non-pilgrims to unnecessarily participate in this irrelevant and extravagant custom?"*
>
> *"The money that is spent on slaughtering goats and burying them in the ground should instead be given to community institutions. They can use this money to open up a magnificent financial bank every year, to*

spread and propagate the Qur'an and other sciences, to rectify and reform ideologies and moral standards, to help the widows and destitute, to perform numerous other virtuous deeds, provided they liberate themselves from the fetters of taqleed (to follow someone in good faith, recognizing him as the authority on that subject... Tr) and shun all useless, rather hazardous, rites and customs."

"It is unfortunate that no one has ever discussed the logical and empirical merits of sacrifice, other than simply emulating and following others."

Is this not an open defiance of the Qur'an? The Qur'an is commanding us to do something, and you insist on first looking into its logical and empirical merits! The Qur'an regards something as *lakum fi ha khair* (in this lies your benefit) and you call it a useless and extravagant custom! The Qur'an includes something in the signs of God and tells us that God has instituted it, and you counter it by citing the study of Western Orientalists that says that it was a custom of the times of ignorance which is being practiced today only by Muslims!

Claiming to follow the Qur'an and at the same time showing such audacity against the Qur'an! If these two qualities go hand in hand then we would have to believe that a thing can both- exist and non-exist at the same time.

The beauty of the Qur'an is that it repudiates all allegations hurled against it. Let us see how the Qur'an replies to the allegations regarding sacrifice:

Just as people used to bow and prostrate before false deities during the days of ignorance, they also used to offer sacrifices in their names. Arabia, India, Persia, Egypt, Rome... there was not a single nation that did not sacrifice animals at the altars of false deities. Even Jews, who were worshipers of the One True God, have repeatedly fallen for this abomination of sacrificing animals in the name of

idols, as alluded to in the Old Testament of the Bible. The Qur'an also speaks of this pagan custom:

وَجَعَلُوا لِلّٰهِ مِمَّا ذَرَاَ مِنَ الْحَرْثِ وَالْاَنْعَامِ نَصِيبًا فَقَالُوا هٰذَا لِلّٰهِ بِزَعْمِهِمْ وَهٰذَا لِشُرَكَآئِنَا ۚ

"They assign to Allah a portion out of the produce and cattle that He has created, saying out of their fancy: 'This is for Allah'- so they deem- 'and this is for the associates (of Allah) whom we have contrived."

(Surah alAn'am ayat 136)

وَقَالُوا هٰذِهٖ اَنْعَامٌ وَّحَرْثٌ حِجْرٌ ۖ لَّا يَطْعَمُهَآ اِلَّا مَنْ نَّشَآءُ بِزَعْمِهِمْ وَاَنْعَامٌ حُرِّمَتْ ظُهُوْرُهَا وَاَنْعَامٌ لَّا يَذْكُرُوْنَ اسْمَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهَا افْتِرَآءً عَلَيْهِ ۚ

"They say: 'These animals and these crops are sacrosanct: none may eat of them save those whom we will'- imposing interdictions of their contriving. And they declare that it is forbidden to burden the backs of certain cattle, and these are the cattle over which they do not pronounce the name of Allah. All these are false fabrications against Allah…."

(Surah alAn'am ayat 138)

The Qur'an veered away the focus of all acts of worship from these false deities and redirected them towards the one True God, including the act of sacrifice. Since the pagans bowed, prostrated and offered sacrifice to please idols, the Qur'an instructed its followers to declare that their acts of bowing and prostrating and offering sacrifices are for God alone. قُلْ اِنَّ صَلَاتِيْ وَنُسُكِيْ وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِيْ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۝ *"Say: Surely my prayer, all my acts of sacrifice, and my living and my dying are for Allah alone, the Lord of the whole universe."* (Surah alAn'am ayat 162). It told them that while the pagans slaughter their animals in the name of their false deities, the Muslims ought to slaughter them in the name of God. فَاذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهَا *"So recite the name of Allah over them."* (Surah alHajj ayat 36). They free the animals to

please false deities and then neither do they allow anyone to ride them, nor do they appreciate eating its meat or feeding it to others. In response, the Muslims were told to make good use of the animals they intended to offer as sacrifice. لَكُمْ فِيهَا مَنَافِعُ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ثُمَّ مَحِلُّهَا إِلَى الْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيقِ ﴿٣٣﴾ *"You may derive benefit (from sacrificial animals) until an appointed time. Thereafter, their place (of sacrifice) is near the Ancient House (Ka'abah)."* (Surah alHajj ayat 33), فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا وَأَطْعِمُوا الْقَانِعَ وَالْمُعْتَرَّ *"Eat and also feed them who do not ask and those who ask."* (Surah alHajj ayat 36). This is because لَن يَنَالَ اللَّهَ لُحُومُهَا وَلَا دِمَاؤُهَا وَلَٰكِن يَنَالُهُ التَّقْوَىٰ مِنكُمْ *"Neither their flesh reaches Allah nor their blood; it is your piety that reaches Him."* (Surah alHajj ayat 37).

Every such person who has even the slightest acquaintance with the wisdom behind Shariah legislation would appreciate the fact that there can be no better method of abolishing paganism, idol worship and false customs than to make exclusive all forms of worship for God alone and to declare those very forms of worship as forbidden if performed to please idols. There was no other way of establishing *Tauheed fil ibadat* (worship of God alone) and eventually *Tauheed fil aeteqaad* (belief in God alone) in this world. It is ingrained within the nature of man that he tends to offer tributes and sacrifices to please those whom he considers to be his guide and saviour. Hence, we find that these forms of worship have more or less been prevalent among all communities right from the beginning of time to date. We even have some Muslims who are indulging in such forms of paganism out of ignorance. Now that we have noted that among all forms of worship, offering tributes and sacrifices has also been prevalent among men, and they find an innate natural inclination towards this particular act, then it becomes incumbent that the act of sacrifice is also declared forbidden if performed in front of idols and made exclusive for the One True God

in order to achieve *Tauheed fil ibadat.* If the logical, spiritual, moral and material benefits of this act are not clear to some person, then he has himself to blame. In God's knowledge and wisdom, it is exceedingly more beneficial for people to "serve Allah with utter sincerity, devoting themselves exclusively to Him" (Surah alBayyinah ayat 5) than the opening of not one, but a million magnificent banks or the establishment of tens of thousands of colleges.

There is one more purpose of sacrifice that the Qur'an alludes to:

As mentioned in the previous discussion, there is one group of men who believes in and worships the creation of God along with God Himself and offers tributes and sacrifices to false deities from the provisions God has granted them. Besides them, there has always existed another group, which is fast increasing in recent times. This group does not believe in God at all; or even if some among them do acknowledge His presence, their idea of God does not go beyond some rational deduction on lines of a mathematical formula. Any relationship with God is entirely lacking. They don't even realize that they have no ownership rights over the wealth and property that they utilize, the produce of the earth that they consume, the luxuries that they enjoy or the animals that they burden. It does not occur to them that they have no privilege over these whatsoever, and that they have rather been granted to them by God as gifts and provisions. There's no need to write about the spiritual and moral abyss and the corruption of deeds this ignorance is leading them into; it is all too evident. It is to counter these depravities that God has established the system of *zakat* on wealth, goods and agricultural produce, and that of sacrifice on their animals. Thus, man devotes a part of the provisions God has given him as a tribute to Him, reminding him that he is not the owner of those things; rather they have been provided to him without he being entitled to them of his own accord,

and that he has no right to spend them at will without the permission of its True Owner. This has been alluded to in the Qur'an in such a subtle manner…

وَهُوَ الَّذِيْٓ اَنْشَاَ جَنّٰتٍ مَّعْرُوْشٰتٍ وَّغَيْرَ مَعْرُوْشٰتٍ وَّالنَّخْلَ وَالزَّرْعَ مُخْتَلِفًا
اُكُلُهٗ وَالزَّيْتُوْنَ وَالرُّمَّانَ مُتَشَابِهًا وَّغَيْرَ مُتَشَابِهٍ ۭ كُلُوْا مِنْ ثَمَرِهٖٓ اِذَآ اَثْمَرَ
وَاٰتُوْا حَقَّهٗ يَوْمَ حَصَادِهٖ ڮ وَلَا تُسْرِفُوْا ۭ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِيْنَ ﴿١٤١﴾ وَمِنَ
الْاَنْعَامِ حَمُوْلَةً وَّفَرْشًا ۭ كُلُوْا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللّٰهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوْا خُطُوٰتِ الشَّيْطٰنِ ۭ

"It is He who has brought into being gardens- the trellised and untrellised- and the palm trees and crops... Eat of their fruits when they come to fruition and pay His due on the day of harvesting. And do not exceed the proper limits, for He does not love those who exceed the proper limits. And of the cattle (He has reared) some for burden and those too small. Eat of the sustenance Allah has provided you and do not follow in the footsteps of Satan."

(Surah alAn'am ayaat 141-142)

وَلِكُلِّ اُمَّةٍ جَعَلْنَا مَنْسَكًا لِّيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللّٰهِ عَلٰي مَا رَزَقَهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَهِيْمَةِ
الْاَنْعَامِ ۭ فَاِلٰـهُكُمْ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ فَلَهٗٓ اَسْلِمُوْا ۭ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُخْبِتِيْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾ الَّذِيْنَ اِذَا ذُكِرَ
اللّٰهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوْبُهُمْ وَالصّٰبِرِيْنَ عَلٰي مَآ اَصَابَهُمْ وَالْمُقِيْمِي الصَّلٰوةِ ۙ وَمِمَّا
رَزَقْنٰهُمْ يُنْفِقُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾

"For every people We have laid down a ritual of sacrifice, that they pronounce the name of Allah over the cattle He has provided them. Your Lord is One God; so submit yourselves to Him alone. And give, (O Prophet), glad tidings to those that humble themselves (before Allah), whose hearts shiver whenever Allah is mentioned, who patiently bear whatever affliction comes to them, who establish prayer, and who spend (for good purposes) out of what We have provided them." *(Surah alHajj ayaat 34-35)*

This is the second reason behind the rite of sacrifice. If someone has an intellectual balancing scale, let him put these benefits in one pan and all the community centres, financial banks and orphanages for whose sake these deniers of Hadith want to stop the practice of sacrifice in another pan, and let him see for himself and inform us which of these two weighs down in the scale.

Now let us analyze the economic objections. You claim that this is a waste of money. On the other hand, the Qur'an says that لَكُمْ فِيهَا خَيْرٌ *"there is a benefit for you in this"* and فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا وَأَطْعِمُوا الْقَانِعَ وَالْمُعْتَرَّ *"Eat and also feed them who do not ask and those who ask."* (Surah alHajj ayat 36). There are many people in this country of yours who are left deprived of nutritious food. Is it, then, against economic interests to provide them with the meat of sacrifice? There are millions of shepherds who rear goats and cattle all year long and profit from them on the days leading to Eid ul Adha. Is closing the doors to their employment your idea of unemployment-eradication? There are thousands of poor families that benefit from the animals' hides and thousands of butchers who get paid for their services this day. Are all these people out of the sphere of your community, that you deem their payments as useless and even hazardous, to the point of calling it a wasteful expenditure?

Moreover, how is it that you are reminded of these community issues and benefits only at those times when money needs to be spent in some religious activity? Is it that all projects related to the institution of banks, establishment of community centres, reformation of beliefs and moral values and the welfare of orphans and widows is stuck up because of the act of sacrifice alone? It seems that no sooner would this act of worship cease, than money would start flowing into these projects....

And if your organizational structure is so strong that you can easily collect money from all parts of India every year and open up banks, kindly utilize your network and

resources to station your agents at every cinema hall, brothel and other such places where lewdness and squandering of wealth is common, so that the money Muslims tend to waste on those profanities may be directed towards community treasuries. This way, you would be able to open up banks every day.

And if you do have any constructive ability, why not use it to strengthen the system of zakat instead of wasting your energies on criticizing the custom of sacrifice? You would very well be able to launch all those projects that you have planned through the cessation of sacrifice by this venture alone.

The last thing I would like to say is that once Muslims develop this mentality that they should stop performing all those religious duties where money is spent and instead use that money to establish community centres and banks, this trend would not stop at suspending the act of sacrifice alone. Tomorrow, another person would take the stage and argue that Hajj, on which billions of rupees are being wasted every year, and which does not seem to have any purpose, should also be stopped and the money 'wasted' on it should be used to open up banks!

The entire issue is that of values. Once the standards are lowered, Hajj would also be stopped tomorrow, just as the practice of sacrifice is being stopped today, whether you like it or not.

Tarjumanul Qur'an
Zil Qadah 1355 AH/ January 1937 CE

A Critique on 'A Research on Sacrifice'

The previous article had already gone to the press when I received the latest edition of the periodical, 'Balagh', Amritsar (dated Zil Qadd '55 AH) in which a certain Mr. Arshi Amritsari had presented his analysis on sacrifice by the name 'Tehqeeqe Qurbani' (A Research on Sacrifice). Although we have already replied to the objections on sacrifice in the previous chapter, we deem it necessary to present a detailed discussion on 'Tehqeeqe Qurbani'.

The learned writer has begun his article with an excerpt from Encyclopedia Britannica, which discusses the views of ancient men regarding sacrifice and the ideological basis of sacrifice in Rome and Greece. It also delves upon the beliefs of Jews among followers of Semitic religions and on what grounds modern men have continued with the custom of sacrifice after being enlightened about the reality of gods, the beliefs of Jewish Rabbis and Greek philosophers regarding God and spirits and the kind of relation between these beliefs and their rites of sacrifice. It goes on to speak about the customs of sacrifice prevalent among ancient Aryans, Romans and Arabs, how Christianity abolished the system of sacrifice and cleared the clouds of ignorance that were spread over human communities, while teaching them that 'giving something to the poor is akin to sacrifice' and 'he who offers charity offers a commendable sacrifice to God'. These statements taken from this Holy Gospel of the twentieth century and included in the introduction of his article definitely add value to our information. But we could not understand why they were included in this article in the first place.

To start with, this entire prologue is irrelevant, because the crux of the matter rests on whether God and His Prophet ﷺ have commanded us to offer sacrifice or not. If it is proved that they have not issued any such command, then the testimony of Encyclopedia Britannica is rendered utterly useless. And if our research leads us to conclude that sacrifice is an Islamic rite which is practiced in obedience to the command of God and His Prophet ﷺ, then Muslims are duty-bound to practice it, irrespective of how deeply submerged in ignorance the Encyclopedia Britannica perceives it to be. We follow Islam not because it concurs with what Encyclopedia Britannica has to say, nor should our commitment to Islam ever be based on it.

Also, it is quite astonishing that those who claim to be the propagators of the Qur'an and that they do not follow anything other than the Qur'an are relying on the studies of the West to aid their own research on a religious issue. If he did indeed wish to enlighten us about the history of sacrifice and the pagan ideologies associated with it, he would have found a lot of material in the Qur'an itself, and the difference between the sacrifices of the days of ignorance and that of Islam could have also been known. Instead, Mr. Arshi opted to look for it in the studies of European scholars and began by first seeking their opinion on this act of sacrifice that has been practiced since the past thirteen centuries, judging its authenticity by their research. We would be accused of having a prejudiced view if we explain why this privilege of preference has been accorded to the knowledge and opinion of Western ideologues in what is essentially a religious matter of Muslims. Hence, it would be far more appropriate if Mr. Arshi himself clarifies the matter. All that we would like to say is that the 'research scholars', whose studies you have presented in the very beginning of your investigation of the issue of sacrifice, have opined on many other topics like the principles and rituals of Islam; rather on Islam, prophethood, revelation and the Qur'an as well. If you

allow us, we would like to bring these to your knowledge and ask you how many aspects of Islam are you willing to see through their jaundiced eyes?

Equally astonishing are the double standards applied by those who conveniently discard the testimony of Bukhari, Muslim, Muatta and all other books of Hadith with regards the words, actions and practices of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, but are quite forthcoming in accepting the assertions of western 'research scholars' regarding 'ancient men', Romans, Greeks, early Semites and Aryans, who predate the Prophet's era by thousands of years! Moreover, the authenticity of the historical data we have regarding those ancient communities comes nowhere close to the authenticity of aHadith that have preserved the accounts of Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ life. Even the weakest of chains narrated by Ibn Majah, Hakim and Baihaqi are incomparably stronger than the sources you are relying upon to present your study on ancient civilizations. Since you consider these sources as authentic and rely upon them to inform us about the activities of the 'ancient man', the beliefs of Semites, the ideologies of Greeks and Romans, kindly allow us to also cite references from Bukhari and Muslim to inform you about the practices of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and the commands he has issued concerning various issues. If you decline to believe in those aHadith, then all we can say is: أَلَيْسَ مِنكُمْ رَجُلٌ رَّشِيدٌ ۝ *'Is there not among you a single right minded person?'* (Surah Hud ayat 78)

On the basis of his study of Encyclopedia Britannica, the learned writer has reached the following conclusion regarding the act of sacrifice:

> *"The development of civilization has made evident how despicable the act of sacrifice is."*

In other words, the act of sacrifice is inherently despicable, but the ancient communities could not realize this owing to their ignorance. But now that civilization has advanced, its ugliness has become evident.

Keep these words in mind and go through this passage of Surah alHajj:

وَالْبُدْنَ جَعَلْنٰهَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ شَعَآئِرِ اللّٰهِ لَكُمْ فِيْهَا خَيْرٌ فَاذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهَا صَوَآفَّ فَإِذَا وَجَبَتْ جُنُوْبُهَا فَكُلُوْا مِنْهَا وَأَطْعِمُوا الْقَانِعَ وَالْمُعْتَرَّ

"We have appointed sacrificial camels among the symbols of (devotion to) Allah. There is much good in them for you. So make them stand (at the time of sacrifice) and pronounce the name of Allah over them, and when they fall down on their sides (after they are slaughtered), eat and also feed those who do not ask and those who ask." *(Surah alHajj ayat 36)*

Every person of average intelligence would notice that the above quoted ayat is an absolute antithesis of what the author seeks to put across. Something that has been referred to as 'symbols of Allah' and has been prescribed as a virtuous deed by the Qur'an has been declared to be resentful by Mr. Arshi's erudite study, who informs us that this act was considered to be a virtuous deed by ignorant people belonging to an age when civilization had not yet developed. Leave aside the issue of whether sacrifice is obligatory or not, needs to be done in each town and village or only at Mina, whether it is better to offer sacrifice or give charity instead... the question most piercing now is that if the command- or even permissibility- of sacrifice can be deduced from the Qur'an, if the Qur'an speaks of some virtue or benefit (no matter how little) that is derived from it, then would the Qur'an not stand accused of being a book belonging to an age when civilization had not yet developed? In that case, would the Qur'an still be regarded as the Word of God or would it be regarded as a book authored by an uncivilized person belonging to the 6th Century? (God forbid!)

This is what you arrive at when you give preference to the Encyclopedia Britannica over the Qur'an. The point at which you have commenced your research and the data you

have acquired to build up your criticism on the practice of sacrifice have caused you to slip at the very first step. Its logical outcome is that you should refuse to acknowledge the Qur'an as the Word of God. However, since your instincts are at conflict with your intellect, forcing you to believe in the Qur'an, you are trying to escape this logical outcome by coming up with the most vague translation and interpretation of the Qur'an to prove that it has not issued any command concerning the sacrifice of animals. This only dilutes the charge your principles have leveled against the Qur'an; it does not nullify it. This I say because the Qur'an would have been absolved of this charge only if it would have opposed and stopped the practice of sacrifice in clear and unambiguous terms.

Man finds himself in a precarious position when on one hand he wants to remain within a system but on the other hand he finds himself at odds with its ideology. In such circumstances, he finds each and every aspect of this system against his nature and tries to pull out all its strings and weave it anew without anyone getting suspicious of his intentions. Hence, he has to take recourse to the tools of interpretations, distortions, derivations and fraud. We regret to say that Mr. Arshi seems to be stuck up in this very predicament. His views on sacrifice do not concur with those of Islam. Sacrifice is regarded as an act of worship in the Qur'an, Hadith, Exegesis, Islamic Jurisprudence and the uninterrupted practice of Muslims. It is a virtuous act that Muslims are commanded to perform, and has its own defined rules and regulations. In contrast, you consider it to be a despicable act, an act of ignorance that has become resentful with the development of civilization. Now you want your point of view to become Islam's point of view and that all its commandments should be remoulded accordingly. However, every literature that Islam has produced in these fourteen centuries goes against your interests. Even the Qur'an goes against your interests. You would label the uninterrupted practice of Muslims (*sunnate*

mutawatir) as that based on ignorance, discard all the Hadith, juristic and exegetic literature as fabricated, but how would you respond to the crystal clear words of the Qur'an? How many words would you redefine? How many derivations would you cast off? To what extent would you put your words in the Qur'anic narrative?

We would present here just two examples to lay bare Mr. Arshi's astonishing attempts at redefining the Qur'an with the hope that our misguided brother and others who share his views may rectify their stand in this regard.

The Qur'an says that Prophet Abraham (Peace be upon him) saw a dream in which he received an indication that he was supposed to sacrifice his only child. On the basis of this dream he got ready to actually sacrifice him. When he lay his son face down to sacrifice him, God interceded by calling out to him: يَٰٓإِبۡرَٰهِيمُ ۝ قَدۡ صَدَّقۡتَ ٱلرُّءۡيَآۚ إِنَّا كَذَٰلِكَ نَجۡزِي ٱلۡمُحۡسِنِينَ ۝ إِنَّ هَٰذَا لَهُوَ ٱلۡبَلَٰٓؤُاْ ٱلۡمُبِينُ ۝ *"O Abraham! You have fulfilled the dream. Thus do we reward the good-doers. This was indeed a plain trial."* (Surah asSaffat ayaat 104-106). The plain and obvious meaning of this passage that can be understood by every man of reason is that God had intended to test His friend, Abraham. Hence, He did not issue a direct command to sacrifice his son, but indicated this through a dream where he is seen sacrificing his child. Since Prophet Abraham was willing to sacrifice everything he loved for the love of God, he got ready to sacrifice him on the mere basis of this subtle hint. *This* was the true sacrifice; and when this was achieved, God stopped him from slaughtering his son and 'ransomed him with a mighty sacrifice'.

Just consider what an epic incident this is! How eloquently does it personify the spirit of لَن تَنَالُواْ ٱلۡبِرَّ حَتَّىٰ تُنفِقُواْ مِمَّا تُحِبُّونَۚ *"You shall not attain righteousness until you spend out of what you love (in the way of Allah)"!* (Surah Al-e-Imran ayat 92). Now have a look at how Mr. Arshi and his co-ideologues view this insightful narrative of the Qur'an... all

because they are opposed to the practice of sacrifice. According to them, Prophet Abraham (Peace be upon him) misunderstood the dream. He did indeed have an enthusiastic faith that had 'made him intoxicated with the love of God', but his level of understanding was far below that of Mr. Arshi and late Maulvi Ahmaduddin. He took the dream to mean that he should literally sacrifice his son. Instead, the intended purpose of God in showing him the dream wherein he is slaughtering his son was to convey that he should forego all worldly hopes that he might have had with his son and dedicate him to religious service. Hence, when he laid his son on his face and was about to commit a dangerous mistake, God admonished him and directed him towards a mighty sacrifice (that of dedicating his only son to religious service).

The biggest hurdle in this interpretation was that God had Himself declared: 'You have fulfilled the dream', which means that Abraham had interpreted the dream correctly. In order to overcome this hurdle, the learned exegete has made a slight change in the ayat's translation. The literal translation is "You have fulfilled the dream" (*tu ne khwab sachha kar dikhaya*), while Mr. Arshi has translated it as '*tu ne to khwab sachha kar dikhaya*' (You have actually fulfilled the dream!). Note how this small Urdu word, '*to*' has completely changed the meaning of the sentence. A certificate of appreciation has been turned into an allegation. He is not the least concerned if the following sentence, 'Thus do we regard the good-doers' becomes meaningless. As for 'This was indeed a plain trial', this has been interpreted as a test of Prophet Abraham's intelligence to see if he can interpret the dream correctly or not; too unfortunate that he failed miserably in this test!

Did you see how God makes major aspects of the Qur'an incomprehensible for a person who resorts to a distorted point of view in its smaller issues? An event, which was one of the greatest episodes of Prophet Abraham's life, has been turned into his mistake. An event

that has always been presented before Muslims to teach them the true spirit of Islam and inculcate within them the qualities of selfless sacrifice and unyielding love for God has been rendered utterly futile and lifeless. The new 'moral of the story' is that even the greatest of messengers were unable to understand God's signs properly and this grace has instead been bestowed upon an intellectual of the 20th century!

Let's take the other example:

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ جَعَلْنَا مَنسَكًا لِّيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَىٰ مَا رَزَقَهُم مِّن بَهِيمَةِ الْأَنْعَامِ

"For every people We have laid down a rite of worship (ritual of sacrifice) that they pronounce the name of Allah over the cattle He has provided them."

(Surah alHajj ayat 34)

This ayat clearly indicates that sacrifice is an act of worship and its rituals have been laid down by God Himself.

However, Mr. Arshi translates it thus: *'Aur dekho, har Ummat ke liye humne ibadat ka taur tareeqa thehra diya ki hamare diye hue paltu chaupaye zibah kare to Allah ka naam yaad kar le.'* (And keep in mind that for every people we have prescribed the rites of worship, that when they slaughter their cattle, they should pronounce the name of Allah over them)

Look how this '*zibah kare to*' (when they slaughter) has diverted the meaning of the ayat. Now this ayat would mean that the thousands of animals that are slaughtered by butchers on a daily basis in abattoirs should be slaughtered while uttering 'Bismillah, Allahu Akbar' and this itself is the 'rite of worship' that has been prescribed by God for every people.

When we come across such distortions, we realize how great a favour God has conferred upon us by preserving each and every word of the Qur'an! Had this not been the

case then we fear a new Qur'an would have been produced in today's era in light of the Encyclopedia Britannica.

Mr. Arshi has resorted to similar interpretations of almost all those ayaat where the Qur'an lays down the command for sacrifice. Then, he has come up with such vague justifications of juristic issues that make it amply evident that he has not even tried to understand the core issue. Instead, his sole purpose of flipping through the pages of aHadith, Islamic Jurisprudence and Exegeses has been to overlook all the overwhelming evidences in support of sacrifice and to dig out and make a mountain out of the slightest of contrary ideas for those Muslims who are unable to reach the true meaning of the scriptures and have no means to ascertain the authenticity of such false mountains. It is rather obvious that there is no scope for a serious debate where the standard of argument and research has stooped to such a low level. If he wills, each and every mistake of his can be unveiled and laid bare, but this would not be of any benefit until and unless he resolves to rectify his ideology and thought process.

Tarjuman ul Qur'an
Zil Qadah 1355 AH/ January 1937 CE

The Status of Sacrifice in Islam

For quite a while newspapers were carrying articles that suggest that the practice of sacrificing animals on Eid ul Adha has no place in Islam; this is just a ritual that has been invented by 'mullas'. Instead of wasting money on this 'useless' act, the same money should be used in some project that would benefit the community. Certain deniers of aHadith had started propagating such ideas some years back and I had offered a detailed reply to these on the basis of the Qur'an, the aHadith and logical arguments in the periodical, Tarjuman ul Qur'an. However, I have noticed that this issue is being raised up in Pakistan yet again. Hence, I deem it necessary to briefly clarify the Islamic commands concerning it, so that people might not fall for such propaganda for want of correct information.

The command of Sacrifice in the Qur'an

First of all, we should know what the Qur'an says about sacrifice. Does it restrict sacrifice to Hajj and its related injunctions alone, or has it commanded us to offer it on other occasions as well? In this regard, we come across two ayaat which are very explicit and have nothing to do with Hajj. The first ayat can be found towards the end of Surah alAn'am:

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٦٢﴾ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ وَبِذَٰلِكَ أُمِرْتُ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ﴿١٦٣﴾

"Say: Surely my prayer and my act of sacrifice, and my living and my dying are for Allah alone, the Lord of the whole universe. He has no associate. Thus have I

been bidden, and I am the foremost of those who submit themselves (to Allah)."

(Surah alAn'am ayaat 162-163)

These ayaat were revealed during the Makkan period. Neither was Hajj made compulsory then, nor were its rites and rituals laid down. Moreover, there is no indication in these ayaat to suggest that they have any relation with Hajj. The word 'nusuk' that has been used here has been used elsewhere in the Qur'an to connote sacrifice. The 196th ayat of Surah alBaqarah says, فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَّرِيْضًا اَوْ بِهٖٓ اَذًى مِّنْ رَّاْسِهٖ فَفِدْيَةٌ مِّنْ صِيَامٍ اَوْ صَدَقَةٍ اَوْ نُسُكٍ *"But whoever among you is sick or has an ailment of the head and has his head shaved shall atone for this either by fasting or by alms-giving or by offering a sacrifice."* From this we realize that the word 'nusuk' refers to sacrifice in the aforementioned ayat of Surha alAn'am as well. Even if this word is understood to mean any act of worship, the element of sacrifice would necessarily be considered part of it.

. The second ayat belongs to Surah alKauthar:

فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكَ وَانْحَرْ ۝۲

"So offer prayer and sacrifice to your Lord alone."

(Surah alKauthar ayat 2)

This is also a Makkan ayat and has nothing to suggest that it is related to Hajj either. I agree that literary scholars have given alternative meanings of '*nahar*' like folding one's hands on the chest, facing the *qiblah* and offering prayers as soon as its time begins. However, all these are far-stretched meanings. In colloquial Arabic, the word *nahar* is always used to refer to sacrifice.

Allamah Jassas writes in Ahkamul Qur'an (vol 3 page 585):

"Only those who have understood this to mean the slaughter of camels are right. The actual meaning of this word is nothing but this. An Arab, when he hears this word 'nahar' would not interpret it as anything

else. If it is said that a certain person did nahar today, what every listener would understand is that he slaughtered a camel today, not that he placed his right hand over his left hand today."

This is why all the translators of the Qur'an like Shah Waliullah, Shah Abdul Quadir, Shah Rafiuddin, Maulana Mahmood alHasan, Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi and Deputy Nazeer Ahmad have translated the word *nahar* as sacrifice.

The Command of Sacrifice in the Hadith

Now we should understand what the Prophet ﷺ understood by these Qur'anic commands and how has he acted upon them. Has the prophet offered sacrifice only during Hajj or did he also offer sacrifices in Madinah on the occasion of Eid ul Adha? Has he offered sacrifices on every Eid ul Adha or only once or twice? Has he only practiced this himself or has he directed the Muslims to offer sacrifices as well? We reproduce here all the aHadith we have encountered on this topic....

1. Bara'a bin Azib narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said, *"The first thing we do today is to offer prayers and return back to offer sacrifice*. He, who did this, followed our way; and he who slaughtered before the prayer, then that would not be counted as sacrifice. Rather, it is just meat that he provided his family with."*
2. In another narrative, *"His sacrifice [1] would be considered valid who slaughtered after prayers and such a person has attained the way of Muslims."*

(Sahih Bukhari, Kitab alAzahi)

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[1] It is quite evident that this is an explanation of 'So offer prayer and sacrifice to your Lord alone' and 'Surely my prayer and my act of sacrifice....' The Prophet has gone by the sequence laid down in the Qur'an and instructed that the prayers should be offered first, followed by the sacrifice.

It is obvious that these narrations relate to Eid-ul-Adha. They have nothing to do with Hajj, because there is no such special prayer offered during Hajj in relation to which we have that offering sacrifice before such a prayer is against the tradition of Muslims while offering it after such a prayer is as per their tradition.

3. Yahya bin Saeed narrates that I heard Abu Umamah bin Sahal say that, *"We used to fatten our sacrificial animals in Madinah and this was the common practice of Muslims."* *(Sahih Bukhari, Kitab alAzahi)*
4. The personal servant of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, Anas bin Malik says that *"The Prophet ﷺ used to sacrifice two rams, and so do I." (Sahih Bukhari, Kitab alAzahi)*
5. Lady Aishah says that *"In Madinah, we used to preserve the sacrificial meat by applying salt to it and would then offer it to the Prophet ﷺ."*
   (Sahih Bukhari, Kitab alAzahi)
6. Abu Ubaid maula Ibn Azhar says that on Eid-ul-Adha, he offered the prayers with Umar bin Khattab. After he had led the prayers, he stood up to deliver the sermon, wherein he said, *"O people! The Prophet ﷺ has forbidden you from fasting on these two days of Eid. One of these Eids is the day you break your fast, while on the other Eid you eat the meat of sacrifice."*
   (Sahih Bukhari, Kitab alAzahi)

   It should be known here that the prayer of Eid-ul-Adha is not offered during Hajj. This means that this sermon of Caliph Umar has been delivered in the city of Madinah and the command that he has mentioned is also related to places other than Makkah.
7. Abu alZubair narrates that I have heard Jabir bin Abdullah saying that, *"The Prophet ﷺ led us in prayer in Madinah on the Day of Sacrifice. Then certain people offered their sacrifices assuming that the Prophet had already offered his sacrifice. At this the*

Prophet issued a command that those who had offered their sacrifices before him would have to offer their sacrifices again. Henceforth, none of you should offer his sacrifice before I do so." *(Sahih Muslim)*

8. Jabir bin Abdullah says that, "I offered the prayers of Eid-ul-Adha with the Prophet ﷺ. When he turned his back, a ram was presented before him. While sacrificing it, the Prophet ﷺ supplicated, *"In the name of Allah, who is the Greatest of all. This is on my own behalf and on behalf of all my people who might not have offered sacrifice."*
(Musnad Ahmad, Abu Dawood and Tirmizi)
9. Ali bin Hussain narrates from Abu Rafe that, *"The Prophet ﷺ used to purchase two rams on the occasion of Eid-ul-Adha which were fat, healthy, having large horns and spotted. After having offered the prayers and having delivered the sermon, one of those rams would be presented before him and he would slaughter it standing right where he had offered his prayer."*
(Musnad Ahmad)
10. Abu Hurairah narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said, *"He who does not offer sacrifice despite having the means to do so should not enter our Eid ground."*
(Musnad Ahmad, Ibn Majah)
11. Ibn Umar says that the Prophet ﷺ stayed in Madinah for ten years and used to always offer sacrifice.
(Tirmizi)

These eleven aHadith have been narrated by various companions (May God be pleased with them all) and have been gathered from all of the six most reliable collections of aHadith. All of these prove that the Prophet ﷺ had understood the aforementioned commands of the Qur'an to mean that the act of sacrifice is not exclusively meant to be performed by Hajj pilgrims alone, but that all Muslims who can afford to offer sacrifices should do so at their

hometowns. The Prophet abided by this practice himself and has also commanded the Muslims to do so, declaring it to be a tradition of Islam to be followed for all times to come.

The Opinion of the Respectable Jurists

On the basis of the Qur'an and the aHadith, the jurists have arrived at a consensus that the sacrifice of Eid-ul-Adha is a part of *Shariyah* (divine Islamic law) and Islamic tradition. The only point of contention is whether it is obligatory (*wajib*) or not.

While commenting upon the stand of the jurists in Fath alBari, Allamah Ibn Hajar Asqalani writes:

> *"There is no dispute on the subject that the sacrifice of Eid-ul-Adha is a part of Islamic law. According to followers of the Shafi'i school of thought and the vast majority of jurists, it is an emphasized tradition (sunnate muakkadah) that suffices for all (kifayah). Another view among followers of the Shafi'i school of thought is that it is compulsory and suffices for all (farz kifayah). According to Imam Abu Hanifah, it is obligatory upon every non-traveler and well-to-do person. One opinion of Imam Malik concurs with this, but he has not restricted it to a non-traveler. Auzai, Rabiyah and Lais also share this opinion. Imam Yusuf from the Hanafi'ites and Ash'hab from among the Malik'ites have gone with the majority opinion. Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal opines that it is detestable (makrooh) to not offer sacrifice despite being capable of doing so. He has also said that offering sacrifice is an obligatory act. Imam Muhammad avers that the tradition of sacrifice is such that it is not permissible to leave it."* *(Vol 10, page 2)*

This shows that as far as the legal status of sacrifice and it being a tradition is concerned, there is a consensus

among the Ummah from the very beginning and there is no one who denies it.

The uninterrupted practice of the Ummah

The biggest proof of it being a tradition and being part of the Islamic law is that it has been practiced right from the blessed time of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to the present day by each and every generation in between. Not a handful of men, but millions of Muslims of every generation have acquired it from millions of Muslims belonging to their preceding generation and have passed it on to millions of Muslims belonging to the next generation. Had this practice been invented and introduced by someone in any phase of Islamic history, how was it possible for all Muslims around the world to unanimously accept it without anyone raising a voice of dissent? And how could the name of its innovator and the time and place of such an innovation escape the books of history? After all, this Ummah has not been made up entirely of hypocrites and opportunists to assume that while a series of aHadith were being fabricated to prove the legal status of sacrifice and a new practice was being innovated and attributed to the Prophet ﷺ, the entire Ummah would shut its eyes and quietly endorse the same! If we happen to believe that our predecessors were indeed such hypocrites and opportunists, then the matter does not stop at sacrifice alone. Prayers, fasts, zakat, Ḥajj and even the prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ and the Qur'ȧn itself would come under the radar of doubt. This is because all these things have reached us from exactly the same source, the same uninterrupted chain of generations that the practice of sacrifice has reached us. If their uninterrupted practice in this regard is met with suspicion, then which act of theirs could be considered above suspicion?

It is quite unfortunate that these days people neither fear God, nor society. Every Tom, Dick and Harry starts

commenting irresponsibly on every religious issue under the sun without any knowledge or understanding whatsoever, absolutely heedless of the consequences of his attacks that target not only the issue at hand but the entire *deen* along with it.

Economic objections

These objections to the practice of sacrifice stem not from some deep study of the Qur'an and the Hadith which might have thrown up arguments that challenge the command of sacrifice. The actual cause of this objection is the materialistic mindset that has completely overtaken the current generation, making them see everything from the economic perspective while obscuring all other values associated with the issue. They start estimating the number of Muslims who offer sacrifice every year that runs into millions, and the average amount of money that is spent per household. When they thus calculate the total amount of money that is spent on sacrifices, they cry out in exasperation, 'Is all this colossal amount of money being wasted on sacrificing animals?' They feel that it would be much more beneficial to spend the same money on community institutions and economic projects. I, however, believe that this is the result of an extremely perverted mentality that non-Muslim influences are inculcating within us. If this is allowed to grow and flourish at the same rate, then tomorrow the same logic would be used to remonstrate that lakhs of people waste billions of rupees every year over Hajj and that instead of wasting so much money every year to visit a few places, the same amount of money ought to be used on community institutions and economic projects. This is not just a hypothetical idea; the atheist regime of Turkey has actually stopped sending its citizens to Hajj for twenty five years because of this very mindset. Next, some other person would start calculating that every day a certain x crore Muslims offer their prayers five times a day and y is the average time taken per

individual, so everyday these many lakh man-hours are wasted. If the same amount of time is utilized for some economically productive work we could generate this amount of wealth. Curse the *mullas* who have for centuries engaged the Muslims in prayers, leading to huge economic losses! This is not a hypothesis either; the Muslims of the Soviet Union are being cajoled into abandoning their prayers on the same logical premise. This logic can be successfully used against fasting as well. Eventually, Muslims would weigh the economic benefits of every aspect of Islam and would discard every such thing that does not seem to have much economic benefit by calling it 'an innovation by *mullas*'. Have the Muslims indeed been left with this sole criterion to verify their religious commands?

Akhbar Qasid
22nd December 1950 CE

The Philosophy of History by Hegel and Marx

One of the many sources of ideology and perspective that have contributed to the spectacular ignorance inundating modern society is the 'Philosophy of History' postulated by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), based on the arguments of which Karl Marx (1818-1883) later articulated the 'Materialist Conception of History'.

Hegel's Philosophy of History in brief

The progress of human culture and civilization is brought about by the initial proposition called thesis, a negation of that thesis called the antithesis, followed by a synthesis whereby the two conflicting ideas are reconciled to form a new proposition. Every era of history is a single complete entity in itself, or in philosophical terms, a living organism. In this phase, the political, economic, cultural, moral, intellectual, religious and knowledge levels of humanity are on a specific plane. There is uniformity and inter-relation between them, as if they are but various aspects of that single living entity with the spirit of that particular time reigning over them all.

When a major era of history develops its spirit to the highest possible level, and the principles, ideas and perspectives governing that era take human culture and civilization to the farthest edge of its capacity, it is then that its adversary- one that was nurtured by this very era- begins to make itself evident. In other words, a new set of ideas, inclinations and perspectives- a new set of principles that develop from the natural requirements of the previous era start countering the parent ideas.

The conflict between the new and the old continues for some time. Eventually, there is reconciliation between the new and the old. A third culture (synthesis) now develops by incorporating some elements from the old (thesis) and some from the new (antithesis), thus heralding the beginning of a new era or phase of history, a new thesis.

Later, when the spirit of this new era also reaches its climax, yet another adversary raises its head from within itself, leading to yet another conflict and yet another reconciliation, which becomes the spirit of a new phase of culture and civilization.

Hegel terms this process of development the 'Dialectic Process'. According to him, there is a perpetual conflict of reason taking place in the dimension of time throughout history. It begins with a proposition (thesis). A counter-proposition is presented as an answer (antithesis). Then, after a prolonged conflict, the Absolute Spirit or Absolute Reason strikes a compromise between the two, accepting some points from both of these to create a synthesis. This synthesis later takes the form of a thesis, only to be answered by a new antithesis, which leads to the formation of a new synthesis.

Hegel postulates that the Dialectic Process is an absolutely collective process. This means that the entire human culture of any given phase of history is a single living body and all the different individuals and groups existing at that time are mere organs or parts of that single body. No individual or group can remain independent of the collective conscience of its era or the reigning spirit of that era's culture and civilization. Even the greatest men, the most prominent historical personalities play no greater role than the pawns of that era's Dialectic game and internal conflict. In this irresistible deluge, the 'Absolute Ideology' is cruising along the waves of history unabated and unchallenged, creating thesis, antithesis and synthesis as it moves ahead.

The Absolute Reason or World Spirit creates a delusion in the minds of individuals and groups that they are playing a guiding or leading role in this historical drama, when in fact it is the World Spirit that is actually using them for its own completion.[1]

While Karl Marx has adopted Hegel's idea of the Dialectical, he has rejected the concept of the Absolute Spirit which was the central theme of Hegel's philosophy. Instead of ideology, he claimed that material resources or economic motives are the foundations on which history develops itself. He averred that what is actually important in man's life is economics. The economic system of a particular historical era develops the form and structure of the entire human culture of that era. The law, values, religion, philosophy, arts and sciences and practically all human ideologies and perspectives of that era develop either under the influence of, or in order to perpetuate and run, the economic system that is prevalent in the society of that era.

According to Marx, the Dialectical Process unfolds itself in history in the following manner: When under an economic system, a class of people gains control over the production, availability and distribution of the means of livelihood and subjugates other people it leads to a gradual feeling of unrest among the subjugated classes. They start demanding a new system of economic production, distribution of life resources and property relations that is more in line with their own interest. In effect, this is an 'antithesis' of the old system, an adversary born out of the

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1 Hegel refers to God using terms like Absolute Reason, Absolute Spirit, World Spirit, Absolute Ideology etc. According to his philosophy, it is the Absolute Spirit or the personality of God that is maturing along with human culture and civilization. God is exhibiting Himself through this veil and is determined towards the completion of his Own Self, marching along the highway of history. As far as man is concerned, he is merely being used as an external manifestation or a tool.

prevalent system itself. This leads to a conflict between the two. In this conflict, the laws, religion, ethics and ideology of the existing system back it to the hilt. Opposing this, the new rising forces that have a sole intention of overthrowing the existing economic structure are compelled to entirely reject the old set of laws, religion and ideology and lay the foundations of a new one in its stead- one that confirms to their economic pursuits. This Class Struggle continues for some time. Eventually, this conflict leads to a change in the economic system, paving the way for a new set of laws, religion, ideology and philosophy that completely replace the previously existing ones.

This is Marx's 'Materialist Conception of History', also referred to as 'Historical Materialism' and 'Dialectic Materialism', wherein the entire issue of development of human culture and civilization and the alterations of history are pivoted on the availability and distribution of economic resources. According to Marx, our lives revolve around this axis, fuelled by class struggle. He does not recognize any firm timeless principles on which religion, ethics and human culture and civilization can be based and which might be regarded as absolute truths. Rather, he feels that initially man adopts a certain method to meet his material interests and fulfill his economic needs. Man then devices a religion, a philosophy of ethics, ideology and perspective in order to strengthen this method and run it successfully and fruitfully. He considers it absolutely natural and understandable for the class of society that finds its economic prosperity in another method to abolish the religion, ethics and ideas of culture and civilization that supported the previous economic system and device a new set of beliefs and philosophies according to its own economic interests. He feels that this selfish conflict is exactly what nature demands; and the only way in which human history develops is that various classes fight each other, clash with each other to satisfy their needs and interests. Man has been fighting all along the highway of

history and is destined to do so in the future as well. Only the unity of economic interests can bring about reconciliation and agreement. Accordingly, those who are united in ideology should come together and form a separate group, and this group should necessarily clash with those who have interests divergent to theirs.

We have no intentions of going into a detailed discussion on the philosophies of Hegel and Marx here. All we wish to point out is that these philosophies have corrupted the basic perspective of the modern generation's educated class with regards religion, morals, culture and society.

Those who have been influenced by Hegel are totally convinced of two things:

a) The entire culture of any given era is a single indivisible entity. All the ethics, ideas, religion, arts, science, philosophy and interpersonal relations that are found in one era reflect the Collective Conscience or Absolute Spirit of that era.

b) When a culture reaches its climax of development, there spontaneously arises from within itself a new set of ideologies and perspectives that clashes with the old principles of culture and civilization, leading to the formation of a new culture that imbibes within itself valuable elements of the old culture as well. Thus, new cultures keep evolving one after the other, with each new culture more advanced than its predecessor because it contains within itself merits of all the previous cultures in addition to valuable elements of the new ideology.

It is but obvious that those who are convinced of these points can never have faith in teachings that date back hundreds of years, which according to them belong to the culture of a foregone era. When they are told about Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad (Peace and blessings be on all the prophets), they are sure to say that

all of them were the products of their respective eras. 'Each one of them had presented an antithesis to the prevalent ideology of their times, which clashed with that ideology and made way for a new culture (synthesis). Many antitheses have been presented after that time and numerous have been the syntheses that have kept developing to the present day. While we do respect them for having put in their efforts to develop human culture during their respective periods, this is not the time to ponder over the antithesis of a bygone era.'

Marxists also concur with these two propositions that followers of Hegel adhere to, with a third idea that has additionally influenced their minds. They regard all the religious, moral and legal ideologies of a particular era products of the economic system of that age. Those ideologies had been formulated to support and safeguard the economic system of that age alone. The logical outcome of their theory is that when the economic system of production and distribution witnesses a change, the religion, morals, laws and other collateral systems should also change accordingly because they were intrinsically related to the previous economic system, having no relation with the spirit of the new economic system.

Who can then expect a follower of Marx to have faith in the religious teachings, laws and morals of a system that is hundreds of years old?

Recently, one of our communist friends had written an article titled, 'What Socialism is Not' in which he tried to prove that there is no conflict between Islam and Socialism. It is quite possible that this misunderstanding is shared by other communists as well. I request them to contemplate over Marx's 'Materialist Conception of History' and its logical conclusions in detail. Do they still think that a person can believe in those ideas and still remain a Muslim? Every person has the right to choose his faith. If a person believes in Marxist ideology, he is most welcome to adopt it, but they should clear their minds before doing so.

For a person to have faith in Marxism and also confess faith in its contradictory ideology speaks of a serious mental dilemma!

Both Hegel and Marx have tried to understand the truth, but both have been unsuccessful in grasping it. They could reach only one aspect of the truth, which they tried to present as the entire truth. As a result, not only did they themselves fall into error, but entangled others in this web of errors as well.

Hegel's theory rightfully claims that historically, human culture and civilization develops with an idea (thesis), a clash with its counter-idea (antithesis) and their eventual reconciliatory product (synthesis). However, he has included many false notions in his theory as well, erecting an edifice that has most of its pillars floating in the air with no firm foundation at all. His calling God the 'World Spirit' and postulating that this Spirit is using human beings to develop and complete itself and claiming that the history of the development of human culture and civilization is actually the developmental journey of God Himself are unfounded fantasies having no substantial proof to support them.

His assumption that man is merely a passive pawn in History's game having no consciousness, no authority and no choice, and that it is actually God who presents contradictory ideas on behalf of men, manufactures clashes between them and keeps creating new ideologies by reconciling them is also utterly baseless with no rational evidence behind it.

These are those fundamental mistakes in Hegel's philosophy that have made a riddle out of it. Hence, although his Dialectic Process of History does possess certain aspects of truth, we find it based much more on speculation than historical data. He was right in pointing out that during the course of history mutually contradictory ideologies have been clashing with each other, following

which there is a reconciliation of these ideas and that this synthesis becomes a part of human culture and civilization. However, he has not taken the pains to study historical events to ascertain the true nature of the ideas that clash with each other, what leads to their reconciliation and why does the product (synthesis) of this reconciliation give rise to a new antithesis from within itself. Hegel only glances over his Dialectic Process from a bird's-eye view instead of delving into the details and piece-by-piece investigation of this process.

Marx was not blessed with even as much insight as Hegel. He does not try to understand human nature, form and mechanism. While he does observe the external creature that has its economic needs, he fails to see the human who exists within this external form, for whom this external body serves as a mere tool and the demands of whose nature are quite different from those of the external self. This short-sightedness and faulted perspective have rendered his socialist ideas absolutely redundant. He thinks that the human who resides within is a slave of the external body that abides by its dictates. All the powers of intellect, derivation, pursuit, experience, instinct, research and development that the human soul has been granted are merely meant to fulfill and satisfy the external creature's desires, needs and requirements. Accordingly, the human that resides within has never done anything to date, nor would he ever do anything in the future, or can he even do anything other than formulate moral and legal principles, forge religious ideologies and adopt a lifestyle as per the aspirations of its master, the external creature. How disgusting and preposterous an idea of human existence! How despicable a notion of culture! How shallow is the mind that came up with such a proposition and how imbecile are those who accept such theories!

It cannot be denied that the cravings and demands of the external self influence the decision-making abilities of the human within; nor can it be denied that there *are* many

people who succumb to their animal instincts. But Marx is absolutely wrong in assuming that the inner human does not have any dominating influence over the external creature. His reading of the history of human culture is extremely off the mark when he supposes that history has been made only by those people whose human souls were subservient to their animal instincts. Had he resorted to an unprejudiced view, he would have observed that everything that can be considered valuable, virtuous and dignified in human history has been the contribution of those souls who had overcome their animal instincts and introduced the values of culture and civilization, morality, spirituality and justice in human society, and had such powerful personalities that they were able to influence the vast majority of those people who had given in to their base instincts.

Hegel and Marx would not have faltered in understanding man's true nature and comprehending the basic laws governing the development of human culture had they resorted to studying the Qur'an instead of relying upon their own imagination and vague derivations. The anthropology and the philosophy of history presented by the Qur'an accurately and convincingly solve all those issues that these gentlemen have entangled themselves with.

According to the Qur'an, man is not just a biological species that is an ensemble of hunger, carnal desires, greed, fear, anger and other such components. Rather, 'man' is that spiritual entity that resides within its external animal body and is subject to moral values. Unlike other animals, he has not been made a slave of his instincts; instead, he has been endowed with the faculties of intelligence, discretion, pursuit of knowledge and power of judgment and thus been granted a kind of autonomy. Unlike other animals, nature does not restrict it to a specified course of action, nor does it completely provide for its needs by itself. Instead, God has sent him on earth with the ability to

strive and struggle; so that he might thus obtain all that he desires, decide his own course of action for this purpose and keep using his authoritative powers to scale new heights of progress.

As for the external body, it has been provided as a tool to serve the inner human. But this servant is unintelligent; it has only physical and carnal desires. Its only goal is to satisfy its basic desires and meet its physical requirements. The external body tries to make a servant of the inner human and compels it to employ all its knowledge and intelligence towards the satisfaction of its bodily desires alone. The inner self seeks to soar high, but the external body tries to cut off its wings and plunge it down. It makes it myopic and a slave of its senses, cultivating in it prejudices wrought on ignorance.

On the contrary, the human residing within has a natural urge to subjugate the external body. God had imbued him with the inherent knowledge of good and bad, righteousness and evil. He has given him the ability to choose between the right and wrong paths, and has created within him a moral inclination that urges him to satisfy even his bodily needs in a manner that befits humans and not animals. He feels ashamed and embarrassed at behaving like animals. His goals are higher than those of animals. He wants to transform himself into a better entity. It is instinctive for him to feel that he has a higher purpose in life.

The entire human history is actually an enactment of this very standoff between the inner human and the external creature. The external creature pulls down the inner human and subjugates it to tread the crooked path that leads to injustice and transgression, immorality and evil, sin and rebellion, profanity and satisfaction of base desires and violation of human relations. The inner human is not pleased with this condition and revolts against the external creature. However, in order to rein in the external creature, he adopts certain twisted paths himself like monasticism,

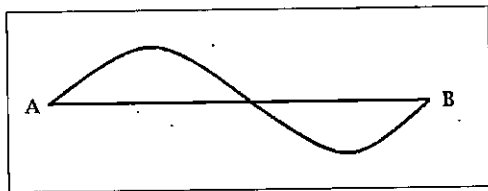
renunciation of the world, self-denial and abstention from fulfilling natural desires and evasion of his social and collective duties. The external creature also revolts against him and drives the inner human towards its own crooked ways.

These diametrically opposite forces continue to engage in a perpetual tug-of-war. The influence of each of these gives rise to certain ideologies, principles and methodologies that imbibe within them aspects of truth as well as falsehood. Man experiments with these mixed principles and methodologies for some time. Eventually, his real nature, that consciously or subconsciously desperately seeks the Straight Middle Path (*asSiraat alMustaqeem*), gets tired of all those crooked ways and discards the false influences, letting only those aspects remain in human life that are based on truth and justice.

كَذٰلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللّٰهُ الْحَقَّ وَالْبَاطِلَ ۬ فَاَمَّا الزَّبَدُ فَيَذْهَبُ جُفَآءً ۚ وَاَمَّا مَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ فَيَمْكُثُ فِي الْاَرْضِ ۭ

'Thus does Allah depict truth and falsehood. As for the scum, it passes away as dross; but that which benefits mankind abides on the earth.' (Surah arRaad ayat 17).

However, after the failure of this mixture of extremes, another set of extremes enters the arena. There is a new tug-of-war and this set is also eventually cast off by human nature in the same way, and for the same reasons that the earlier set of truth and falsehood was discarded.

Thus, human culture and civilization keeps developing in the form of a wave that keeps ascending and descending around a straight base line. Let's take an example:

In this diagram, A-B is that natural path that the Qur'an refers to as *asSiraat alMustaqeem* (straight path), the sound path, righteousness, guidance, way of thy Lord etc. Initially mankind was in its natural state كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً (*'In the beginning, all the people followed the same way'*... Surah alBaqarah ayat 213). Then, man developed an urge to transgress beyond his stated limits وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ فِيهِ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ أُوتُوهُ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَتْهُمُ الْبَيِّنٰتُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ (*'And none differed over it except those who were given it- after the clear proofs came to them- out of jealous animosity among themselves'*... Surah alBaqarah ayat 213). These urges and inclinations made man deviate from the straight middle path time and again. Each time, bad experiences and natural human disposition compelled him to revert to the straight middle path. However, upon reaching the base line, man used to deviate towards the other extreme and was again forced to revert back to the middle path.

What Hegel refers to as 'thesis' and 'antithesis' are the very same extreme inclinations that make man deviate from the straight line in either direction; and the 'synthesis' that he refer to are those points where this wave intersects or meets the straight line. Although both Hegel and Marx could observe this wave line in their study of history, what they were unable to observe was this straight line that remains straight from the beginning to the end and which man's innate nature seeks to comply with, and whose existence between these wave lines is such an undeniable truth that every heart testifies to it. It is the quest of this straight middle path that has made every thinker and philosopher restless.

God's prophets were the only people who had knowledge of this straight middle path. They kept calling people towards it and practically demonstrated it by establishing society on that straight middle path.

لَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ وَاَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْمِيْزَانَ لِيَقُوْمَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ

'Indeed We sent Our messengers with clear signs, and sent down with them the Book and the Balance that people might uphold justice.'(Surah alHadeed ayat 25)

Tarjuman ul Qur'an
(Jamaadi-ul-akhir 1358 AH/ August 1939 CE)

Darwin's Theory of Evolution

One of the readers of Tarjumanul Qur'an asked us:

"Darwin's Theory of Evolution is regarded as a fact today. However, while studying the Qur'an I have often felt that the two contradict each other. The most obvious contradiction is that the man mentioned in the Qur'an has been man since the very first day, having been created all of a sudden on a particular date. He is portrayed as the ancestor of all mankind. However, the biological sciences that are being taught to us testify that man has gradually evolved from animals and we cannot point towards a specific date on this evolution timeline when the animal phase ended and the human phase began, about which the Qur'an says: فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ رُّوحِي فَقَعُوا لَهُ سٰجِدِينَ ۝ *'After I have created him and breathed into him My spirit, fall you down, prostrating yourselves to him'* (Surah Saad ayat 72). This is but one example of the contradiction between the Qur'an and the Theory of Evolution, there being many more details related to creation where the two do not concur with each other. These contradictions make it difficult for today's science student to salvage his faith. Would you please suggest a solution to this problem?"

The query that our dear reader has quite beautifully and clearly put up does not require us to delve into the arguments and testimonies of Darwin's Theory of Evolution in order to solve it. All we need to ascertain is whether this theory is simply a view postulated by Darwin or an established scientific fact. And if it is indeed only a

view, then is it worthy enough to make a believer question his faith on the Qur'an?

At the very onset, please note just as Darwin's theory was merely a theory in the mid-19th century, it continues to remain just a theory today in the mid-20th century as well. It has not been proven to be a fact. It should not be difficult for an educated person to understand the difference between a theory and an established fact. Also, if a person is compelled to have second thoughts over his faith and beliefs, then this can happen only if his beliefs contradict established facts, not theories. If the faith of a person is so weak that it cannot bear the assault of mere theories and assumptions, then such a faith is no faith at all, it is merely a notion that easily wanes off with every passing whisper and rumour.

Keeping in mind this reality about Darwin's Theory of Evolution, let us now glance over its academic and logical status. The most perplexing question troubling biologists today is the origin of life. The Qur'an says that life originates with the command of God. It is only the command of God that can put life in a lifeless thing. However, in this age of European renaissance, modern science is being developed by such people whose attempt has been to avoid acknowledging the role of a supernatural entity in the working of the universe at all costs. It is their ardent desire to locate the driving force that sustains and nourishes nature from within nature itself. This fundamental mistake has made them encounter certain difficult questions and they have been forced to seek answers to these questions in theories and assumptions. Based on such theories and assumptions they tried to understand why there is diversity in species and the basis of superiority between these species. Darwin is one of those people who adopted this method to answer these questions. He has himself, however, never claimed to have arrived at the truth. Even the scientists among those people who are convinced of his theory do not claim that their assumptions

are irrefutable facts. It is only those who have been touched with a whiff of science who keep harping upon this theory as if the truth has been unveiled before them.

Had Darwin adopted the starting point offered by the Qur'an when he embarked upon his investigations and research, he would have reached the conclusion that the remarkably organized diversity and mutual superiority among various life species that we observe in nature right from a unicellular organism to man is the work of a Wise Designer who after providing an appropriate environment and complementary surrounding for each life form keeps creating them with their characteristic traits and has been obliterating others that no longer fit in His design. However, as I have mentioned earlier, these people shy away from acknowledging the presence of a Designer and do not want to see His signs of creation in the nature that He has created. Hence, they wish to explain their observations in such a way that this entire system might appear self-sustaining and self-developing. This is precisely why Darwin came up with the evolutionary theory to explain this diversity and superiority among various species. This also explains why Europe was so quick in accepting it. Europe had long been scouting for some crutches to support its atheism, and when it found these crutches in Darwin's theory it grabbed it with both hands and introduced it not only in all its branches of science but made it a radical component of its philosophy, ethics and even its sociology. This, despite the fact that this theory has so many gaping loopholes when examined from the academic and rational perspectives that it is hardly conceivable for any right minded person to include this theory in the list of those that tend to offer plausible explanations to visible phenomena.

Veering away from an assiduous criticism of the theory in question, I shall try to explain the fundamental faults in Darwinism by means of a parable. Let us suppose a Martian science professor visits the earth along with his

students to conduct some academic research. Let us also assume that these aliens have some defect in their eyes because of which they are unable to see human beings; all they can see are the things they have manufactured here and their tools of civilization and resources. This research professor observes many things manufactured here and can very easily discern between the forms and structures of each of these. He also realizes that some of these things are much better than others. During the course of his study, he comes to know that some of these things have quite recently been made, some others are ancient and have been enduring till the present age while certain others that were used earlier are now obsolete. He spends some days organizing these scattered pieces of information in his mind and eventually classifies these structures into various grades depending upon their form and kind.

Next, he advances his research and tries to determine how these various structures of varying grades were formed, why there is so much variation among them, why are some of these more advanced than others and why are certain structures still in use while others have been rendered obsolete. In effect, what are the laws and principles governing them?

One possible reply to these questions could be that there is probably some entity residing here of so-and-so description that manufactures these structures as per its needs and requirements, keeps making those things that continue to serve his purpose, has stopped manufacturing those products that he no longer requires and is gradually stepping down the production of those things that now have much better forms to replace them. For some vague reason, however, the Martian professor does not want to acknowledge the presence of any such entity on earth. Hence, in order to provide an explanation to his observations, he focuses on other possibilities and comes up with a theory that all these structures probably owe their origin to a single basic structure. This basic structure must

have then started developing and adapting as per its surroundings under the influence of so-and-so environmental factors to differentiate into various structures. These structures then clashed with each other and competed with each other to better adapt to and optimally harness the surrounding environment. In this struggle for 'survival of the fittest', those structures that lagged behind were obliterated and those that succeeded in this struggle were 'naturally selected' by the environment to proliferate. It is this very struggle that led to the development and evolution in the form and quality of these structures and it was through this struggle for survival that one form of structure kept evolving into another form.

For instance, he supposes that the cart kept exerting itself for many years until some of its more capable members kept undergoing transformation and it eventually evolved into a chariot. Then the chariots started exerting themselves until some of their more capable members underwent further transformation and evolved into cars. Next, certain cars observed high rise buildings and tall trees and aspired to outreach them by leaping and jumping. This continued for some years until some of them gradually developed wings and evolved into airplanes.

The students accompanying this Martian professor ask him that if the cart gradually evolved into a chariot and the chariot gradually evolved into a car and the car gradually evolved into an airoplane, then there must surely be quite a few links between the cart and the chariot, the chariot and the car and between the car and the airoplane- such intermediate structures that resemble either of the two structures and are still in various phase of evolution, with a continuous chain of structures in various phases of development. For example, between the chariot and the car, there should definitely be many vehicles that are part chariot and part car in different stages of evolution. Similarly, between the car and the airoplane we should find many such vehicles whose wings are not yet fully

developed. Hearing this, the professor kept thinking for a while and then replied that 'Yes, these intermediate links must surely be present. You can see the chariot present before you. Some chariots must have got transformed into 'chariot-cars', then they must have got transformed into 'motor-chariots' and finally into the 'motor cars' that you see here. Some motor cars must have exerted themselves and taken the form of 'winged motors', which must have evolved into 'motor-wings', some of which must have evolved further to become the airoplanes that you can see flying in the air. The intermediate links that I have mentioned ought to be present somewhere. Go and look for them, they must be buried in the earth.

The professor offered this explanation and washed his hands off the topic. The students had always carried a deep rooted prejudice against humans from Mars itself and could not convince themselves of their existence. Hence, they chose to repose all their trust in the professor's lame research, and believed in him to such an extent that they neglected the 'probably' and 'must have' from the professor's explanations and instead replaced them with 'definitely' and 'did' in their lectures and presentations. They now refer to imaginary structures like 'motor-chariots' and 'motor-wings' in their academic lectures with such confidence that it would appear as it these structures are kept on display in their museums. However, what actually exist are none other than the cart, the chariot, the car and the airoplane.

This parable perfectly explains Darwinism and the attitude of its followers. If you happen to go through its original literature, you would realize that it is inundated with 'probably' and 'must be'. Science, on the other hand, is based on 'is' and not 'must be'. If science indeed has any room for 'must be', then why should there be a different treatment for two ideas with 'must be'... especially when one of this 'must be' seems more probable that the other 'must be'? If you are ready to admit 'must be' to explain

your observations, then my 'must be' is much stronger than your 'must be', one that says that the origin of life, the variety found therein and the mutual superiority of its species must be the result of the command and design of a Wise Being. My 'must be' better explains the observable natural phenomena than the 'must be' postulated by Darwin and does not leave any question unanswered. Over and above everything, the point that goes in my favour is that you would hardly find anyone who is able to say anything more than 'must be' with certitude as far as Darwinism is concerned, while there are and have always been millions of upright people who have never uttered a lie who vouch with all conviction that it certainly 'is' and we bear witness to the fact that it 'is'. Then why is it that students of science are inclining towards Darwinism instead of coming here? Can you think of any plausible reason for this other than the aversion for God that they have been inheriting right from the Middle Ages? If this is indeed the case then why is it so that people have preferred to call something 'knowledge' when it is nothing other than their 'emotion' and 'prejudice'?

And it is not just that this theory is hollow in its intellectual and rational content. Any sane person who ponders over the devastating effects this malicious perspective has had on human lives once it entered the spheres of philosophy, ethics and sociology would realize that Darwinism tops the list of those ideologies that have sought to ruin humanity. It has made man believe that he is just another animal. As a consequence, man has taken the liberty to act as savage animals in all walks of life. It is because of this ideology that instead of seeking the laws and principles of life from a superior source of guidance, man is seeking the same from the lives of animals. Darwinism has presented this universe as an arena and taught him that conflict, war and struggle are the true elements of nature. Only the ones who exert themselves with all their strength in this struggle for existence are truly

successful; they alone are righteous and deserving. On the contrary, the weak are unrighteous; their extinction and annihilation is the natural outcome of the law of nature and this should be accepted as a natural form of justice.

It is because of this ideology that individuals, groups, communities and entire nations have turned this world into an arena and have considered the destruction of the weak at the hands of the mighty a basic requirement of nature.

Tarjumanul Qur'an
Muharram, Safar 1363 AH/
January, February 1944 CE)

Convocation Ceremony Speech

[This speech was delivered at an Islamia college of Punjab on the occasion of their convocation ceremony in 1940 CE]

Respected teachers, people in the audience and dear students,

I am genuinely grateful for having received this opportunity to speak at your convocation ceremony. I have used the word genuinely because this gratitude is not ceremonial, but truly genuine, and derives from a deep sense of humble appreciation. It is very well known to those who know me that I am a strong adversary of the educational system that is being followed in this grand institution of yours and under which your successful students are receiving their graduation certificates today. When the organizers of this ceremony, despite having known this fact, invited me to speak on this occasion, it was but natural for my heart to fill up with awe and admiration for such people who have a heart big enough to listen to a person who is opposed to their methodologies. I am also grateful for having been invited to speak to the youth of this community at the very moment when they are about to leave you and step into the practical world with us.

Respected guests, now kindly allow me to divert my address from you and speak a few words to my dear ones who are graduating today, for there is very little time and so much to speak to them....

Dear students, you have spent many precious years of your life here to obtain this education. You have been yearning for this day when you would receive rewards for

your efforts in the form of degree certificates. It therefore saddens me to convey my views to you on a day that you regard most momentous in your life and about which you must be so exited. But it would be a great injustice to you if I take your jubilation into consideration and refrain from telling you those things that I sincerely believe to be true and about which I deem necessary to caution you today, and today itself… because today you would be completing one phase of your life and entering the next. The fact remains that I consider your alma mater- and not just this institution, but all such educational institutions- not centres of learning but abattoirs. In my opinion, you are being slaughtered here, and the degrees that you would be receiving in some time from now are actually your death certificates that would be handed over to you by your murderers at a time when they are sure that they have extinguished the final spark of life from your bodies. You should consider yourselves quite fortunate to have emerged alive out of this organized and planned abattoir. I have not come here to congratulate you for receiving your death certificates, but to empathize with you. Being a member of your community, it is the natural compassion I have for you that has brought me here. I can be compared to a person who arrives at a place where his brethren were killed and digs through the heap of dead bodies to try and find at least one person who still has some breath left in his lungs.

I assure you that I am not over-emphasizing my point. I have not come here to sensationalize an event. This is genuinely my point of view with regards this educational system. If I explain in some detail why I think so, it is quite possible that you too would be compelled to concur with my views.

You all might know that if a plant is uprooted and replanted in a place whose soil, water, air and climate do not suit it, it would never be able to survive there, except of course if its natural environment is artificially reproduced at the new place. But it is obvious that every plant cannot

be given the luxury of the controlled environment of a laboratory all its life. If this extraordinary condition is discounted for, it would be absolutely correct to state that uprooting a plant from one place and replanting it in a place having a different climate is akin to destroying it.

Now consider the plight of such a plant that has neither been uprooted from its place, nor has it been subjected to a different climate… left in the same soil, same environment and the same climate in which it was born. However, it has been scientifically modified in such a manner that despite remaining in its own surrounding, it gets detached from its surrounding's air, water, climate and soil and it no longer remains capable of spreading its roots in that soil or gaining nourishment from that air and water or proliferating in that climate. Because of this internal modification, its condition becomes the same as that of a plant that has been uprooted from its parent location and replanted in an environment not conducive for its growth. Now it is in dire need of an artificial environment to be created around it and artificial nourishment to sustain it. If this laboratory environment is not provided it would wither away in the very place of its birth.

The first act of uprooting a plant and replanting it elsewhere is a much lesser injustice than the second act of making the plant a stranger to its own parent environment. Now if millions of plants are subjected to this atrocity and it becomes difficult to provide a laboratory environment for each of these, then this would no longer be called a mere injustice, it would be called a genocide!

My study of the prevalent scenario tells me that you all are being subjected to the same treatment in these educational institutions. You have been born in an Indian Muslim society.[1] It is this very land, culture, air and water and social surrounding that you owe your existence to.

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[1] It should be kept in mind that this speech was delivered several years before India's partition.

There is no way you can develop and proliferate other than spreading your roots in this very soil and gaining nourishment from this very environment. The more you are able to relate to this environment, the more stability would you gain and the more you would contribute towards the beauty of this abode. But what is happening instead? The education and training that you receive here, the ideology that is imbibed in your minds, the thoughts, emotions and aspirations that arise within you, the habits, manners and qualities that you develop, and the thought process, temperament and lifestyle that you are cast into- do any of these preserve any relation that you had with your parent soil, climate, air and water? The language that you speak and write, the clothes that you wear, the lifestyle that you adopt, these views and perspectives that you gain from this education- what relation do these have with the millions of brothers among whom you live and die, or with the culture that you see all around you. Your personality and this environment have become strangers to each other. How I wish you would have at least been spared the ability to feel this detachment and the pain associated with it!

You can very well appreciate that a raw material is subjected to manufacturing processes and craftsmanship in order to make it useful to others. The things that do not meet this purpose get wasted and all the effort that was put into it is also rendered futile. A piece of cloth is subjected to sewing machines so that it can become a perfectly fitting dress. If this purpose is not met, then we would say that the effort put into it actually damaged the cloth instead of making it any better. An effort is made to cook raw food for the sole purpose of making it palatable. If the dish is not worth eating, then the chef has wasted the food instead of preparing it. In the same way, the purpose of education is to take those people who have been born in a society and whose skills are still raw in nature, groom them and embellish them in the best possible manner in order to make them capable of becoming beneficial assets of the

society that they owe their existence to and that it becomes a source of their stability and development. But the education that detaches a person from his society and his real purpose is actually guilty of wasting the person instead of developing him. The children of every community are its future assets. Nature sends them as clean slates and leaves it to the community to engrave its destiny on these slates. But we are that bankrupt community that surrenders its assets to others. Instead of writing on them our own destinies, we allow others to engrave on these slates whatever they wish… even if it is our own death sentence.

When you have a suit stitched but it does not fit you, you are forced to take it to the market to sell it off at whatever price you get in order to make good the loss to whatever extent possible. Had the cloth been an intellectual entity, it would itself wish that there be some demand for a suit of its size and design somewhere or the other so that its purpose is met and it is not discarded as scrap. Until it fits someone, it would keep doing the rounds of showrooms and scrap-yards. A similar situation is faced by those who graduate from such colleges. When they return to the society that had sought to develop and groom them, the people of that society as well as the graduates themselves realize that they are unfit for their culture and lifestyle. Just as our digestive system does not accept the food that does not suit it, so also does society have a natural tendency to reject those people who do not fit in. As a result, realizing them to be of no use to their society, they tend to auction them off and sell them at whatever price they can get in the bargain. They themselves do not see any purpose of their life other than being sold off somewhere. Please try to understand the plight of the nation that sells off its best human assets to others. We are that wretched nation that sells off human beings in exchange for shoes, clothes and food! The man power and intellectual resources nature had gifted us are being utilized by others. God had gifted us with the strength of these sturdy bodies, the enormous

capabilities of these minds, the power of the hearts beating in these wide chests; but hardly one or two percent of these turn out to be of any use to us. The rest are purchased by others… and we are foolish enough consider this loss to be a great success. Nobody understands that it is these very people who are the real assets of our lives. Selling them off is not a profitable bargain, but an absolute loss.

I often get to meet young men who are pursuing higher education or have just graduated from colleges. I begin by asking them if they have any goal in life. But it depresses me to no end to realize that hardly one in a thousand have any purpose set in life, with the vast majority even oblivious of the fact that human life can or should have any purpose at all. They feel that having a purpose in life is merely a philosophical or literary idea. They do not consider it of any practical consequence to decide upon any goal that their life's struggles and efforts ought to have. Dumbfounded at the state of such highly qualified youngsters, I am unable to form a positive opinion about this educational system that claims to groom students' mind for fifteen to twenty years, yet does not make them capable of establishing any goal for their strengths and abilities or determining any purpose to the efforts they are putting in, or even realizing the need to have any aim in life. Does this education make human beings or kill them? It is for animals to spend an aimless life. If even man lives because he has to, and employs his strengths only to eat and procreate, then there remains no difference between man and animals whatsoever.

The object of my criticism is not to humiliate you. It is criminals who are humiliated; you are not criminals but victims. I am saying all this out of empathy for you. Now that you are entering the practical phase of your lives, I want each of you to thoroughly reflect upon your position at this stage.

You are citizens of the Islamic nation. This nation is not an ethnic community. You do not become a Muslim

just by virtue of you being born here. Nor is it the name of a cultural group that requires you to be socially associated with it to remain its member. Rather, Islam is the name of a distinct ideology on the basis of which our entire civilized life is erected along with all its components and aspects. The existence of this nation depends upon the sole condition that its members understand its ideology, relate to its spirit and are also willing and capable of presenting a practical explanation and interpretation of this spirit in their social lives. It is the intelligentsia of this nation that is especially in need of this knowledge, insight and the need to put it into practice, because it is this class that would lead the nation. Although it is the requirement of every community that its intelligentsia completely confirms to the culture of that community, it is the Muslim community that needs this more than anyone else. This is because the basis of our identity is neither ethnicity, nor blood, colour, language nor any material bond; it is only Islam. There is no way we can survive or progress other than that our nation's individuals- especially our intelligentsia- are cast in the mould of Islamic ideology and work culture. In this regard, whatever weakness is left in their education and grooming, it would directly reflect upon our community life; and if they are completely devoid of it, then that would be a sign of our demise.

This is an irrefutable fact. Is it not the case that the contemporary education and grooming that is imparted to our Muslim children is not aimed at making them leaders of our community but aimed at making them destroy it? In these institutions, you are being taught philosophy, science, economics, law, politics, history and all those subjects that have some value in the market. But you are left completely bereft of Islamic philosophy, Islamic wisdom, Islamic principles of economics, Islamic concept of law, Islamic form of politics and Islamic history. What does this lead to? You develop a concept of life with all its inherent details and aspects along completely un-Islamic lines. You start

thinking in un-Islamic ways, view all matters of life with an un-Islamic point of view... and you are compelled to do so because you have never been introduced to the Islamic point of view. You only receive some vague information about Islam, which is always unreliable and even incorrect, and contaminated with a lot of myths and superstitions. Such scattered pieces of information only serve to drive you further away from Islamic ideology. I see that those of you who are emotionally attached to Islam just because it is the religion of your forefathers, but have already become non-Muslims as far as your ideology is concerned, keep convincing yourselves that Islam must definitely be true even if it does not make any sense to us. As for those who are devoid of this emotional attachment as well, they never let any opportunity slip by to oppose it or make it an object of ridicule!

The practical training that you receive along with this education and the environment that surrounds you and the specimens of practical life that you encounter are almost completely devoid of any sign of Islamic values, character and way of life. Now it is but obvious that those who have neither been exposed to the theoretical nor the practical aspects of Islam are not angels; they cannot be expected to become good Muslims all by themselves. Nor is it that divine teachings are revealed to them from the heavens to fill their hearts with religious knowledge. The water and air are not going to provide them with Islamic training. It is not their fault if their minds and actions are devoid of Islam; rather, it is the fault of such colleges that are established under the current educational system.

As I have mentioned earlier, it is my innate instinct that tells me that you are being slaughtered in these colleges and the grave of your community is being dug here. You have been rendered useless for the society in which you were born, on whose expense you received your education and with whom your success and lives are intimately related. Not only that you have been made

incapable of contributing to your society's success, but you have been deliberately and meticulously groomed in such a way that every act of yours might become disadvantageous for your society, to the point that even if you try to benefit it, it would prove disastrous for it. This is because you are oblivious of its nature and have been kept unaware of even its basic principles; your entire grooming has been done according to a plan that is diagonally opposite that of the Islamic nation.

I'm sure that if you understand this position of yours, and if you completely realize the intensely critical state in which you are being made to venture into the practical world, you would definitely try to make whatever amends possible. A complete remedy might no longer be feasible, but I would offer you three points of advice that you can make use of:

1. Try to learn the Arabic language to the best of your ability, because the principal source of Islam, the Qur'an, is in Arabic. Unless you read this book in its original language, you would never be able to completely grasp the Islamic ideology. The terrifying way in which Arabic was once taught is no longer required. Using modern techniques, you can easily learn Arabic within six months- at least as much Arabic that would allow you to understand the words of the Qur'an.
2. The study of the Qur'an, the biography of the Prophet ﷺ and the life of his companions is imperative if you want to understand Islam. You have spent 15-16 years of your life studying other subjects. Now kindly spend half that time, or at least a quarter of that time in trying to understand those things that form the foundations of your society, without knowing which you would not be of any use to it.
3. Clear your minds of whatever favourable or unfavourable opinion you might have had held earlier

about Islam based upon the incomplete and scattered pieces of information you have been exposed to. Indulge, instead, in a systematic study of Islam. Whatever opinion you form after such a study would be worth admitting. It does not behove an educated person to form an opinion about anything without gathering enough information about it, does it?

I conclude my address with a solemn prayer that may God help you and save you from the dangers in which you have been trapped.

Tarjumanul Qur'an
(Muharram-Safar 1363 AH/
January-February 1944 CE)

The Issue of Attire

[This article was first published in 1929 in 'Ma'arif' (معارف), Azamgarh. It was republished in Tarjumanul Qur'an in 1940, and it is now been reproduced here.]

If the etiquettes established by culture are kept aside for a moment and clothing is seen merely from the original perspective of it being a natural requirement for which it was primarily used by mankind, then it would trickle down to two things- a means of covering those private parts of the body that man naturally feels shy of exposing, and a shield against the climatic conditions that he is exposed to. In its most basic form, a single kind of dress that meets both these purposes would prove sufficient for all human beings. This is because all human beings have the same physical form and have the same body parts that they would want to cover. At the most, based on specific climatic conditions, we can have some minor differences like the dress being light and shorter in hot and humid areas and thicker and longer in colder areas.

The information that we have obtained regarding ancient civilizations lends support to this idea that when clothing was just a natural requirement of human beings and was based upon his specific needs, it was a simple dress with hardly any variety seen therein, apart from the variations that were dictated by climatic conditions. However, with the advancement of civilization, when man became more cultured, industries started coming up, new resources began being explored, and when man began to develop a 'taste', he began to feel the need of something more, over and above the fulfillment of his basic

requirements. Since these new influences differed in quantity and quality across different civilizations, the additions they made to their basic form of clothing were also of various kinds, confirming to their own tastes and inclinations.

It is impossible to enlist all those various factors that play a role in the origin, changes and development in fashion in various communities. Over thousands of years, the collective life of a nation and the individual lives of each of its members are influenced by innumerable internal and external factors. We have no access to their details. Moreover, there are certain influences that are so fine that they go unnoticed. But if we were to ignore the fine details and concentrate only upon those major factors that have influenced the fashion of various communities over the years, we can come up with the following list:

1. Geographical factors: Those that compel the residents of a particular area to adopt a certain type of clothing and culture.
2. Moral and Cultural ideas: Those that lead to the differences of clothing of men and ladies among various communities.
3. Natural taste: One that develops variously under various influences in every community. As a result, the taste of each community always differs from that of another community.
4. Social norms: One that develops within every community on the basis of its specific geographic, cultural, economic, intellectual and moral conditions. Every community adheres to the dress code that confirms to its own social norms.
5. Economic factors: This includes the source of employment of members of a community, their businesses, their industries, and their financial conditions (whether rich or poor). The clothes of any

community are always dependent upon these factors and undergo changes with the changes in these factors.

6. Culture and civilization: Every community has its own level of civilization that influences its national dress and confirms to the level of its culture and civilization.
7. Community traditions: Under which every generation inherits a particular lifestyle and mode of clothing and allows the next generation to inherit the same with minimal modifications. This continuity of fashion actually vouchsafes the continuity of the community itself. This is why it is natural for every community to hold it very close to its heart.
8. Foreign factors: Those factors that influence a community's ideas and lifestyle because of its interaction with other communities. To what extent a community accepts a foreign influence depends largely upon its own political, moral and intellectual conditions.

These are those major factors that govern not only the clothing of a particular community but all aspects of its collective life. The clothing of every community is the outcome of all these factors put together. When we look into the issue of national attire in light of the above analysis, we derive two facts:

One, that clothing is not just an external tool of hiding one's private parts or means of protection from forces of nature. The psychology, culture and civilization, traditions and the collective conditions of the community have a radical influence on the fashion of that community. It is actually the manifestation and representation of the spirit that dwells within the body of that community. In fact, the clothing of every community is a language by means of which it speaks to the world and introduces its national identity to the global fraternity.

Secondly, with the sole exception of geographical factors, all the other factors that govern the attire of a

community are those that gradually keep changing with time. None of them are constant or rigid in nature. On the contrary, each of these is by its very nature subject to change. The change and progress they undergo have an effect not only on fashion, but on all aspects of community life. When arts and sciences start spreading in a developing nation, when their ideas get enlightened, when their trade and industry flourishes, when there is economic prosperity, when there is increased interaction with other communities and they get to learn various things from their etiquettes, society, culture and civilization, then naturally the entire community life of that nation starts witnessing a development. There is a change in its emotions, a rectification in its inherent taste, a reformation and sophistication in its social norms, they become more civilized, new ways are adopted to meet new requirements and traditions come to be honoured in more humane ways. With the gradual development of all aspects of life, the national attire also undergoes transformation on lines of its material and appearance to make it more beautiful, appealing and graceful. None of the phases of its development requires a conference to be called or a resolution to be passed in parliament to decide upon a specific form of clothing for the entire nation or to promote any particular kind of dress. Rather, there is a gradual change in the collective fashion of a community over a period of time under the influence of the factors governing community life. The progress and development of the nation has a natural bearing on the fashion of that nation, with the taste and temperament of the entire nation coming together to make it better and better.

This is the natural way in which a national dress originates, undergoes change and variation and develops into a better form of clothing. As opposed to this, the unnatural or artificial way is when the dress of a community is forcefully changed with that of another community. As far as the element of change is concerned, it

manifests itself in both conditions- natural development as well as an artificial superimposition. But there's a vast difference between the two. The first form of variation can be likened to the growth of a tree. As it grows, there is a change and diversification in its colour, form, appearance, fruits, flowers, leaves and branches. However, despite all these changes, the identity of the tree remains intact. A tamarind tree would remain a tamarind tree all its life. A mango tree would remain so in all its phases of development. It would acquire a lot from the soil, the water, the air, the heat and the sunlight- but it would take these and make them a part of its identity. On the contrary, the second kind of change is such that a tree started off as a tamarind tree, but later the bark of the mango tree was glued to it and the leaves and branches of a mango tree attached to it. Now it has become so difficult to recognize this strange artifact that no one can say for sure whether is it a tamarind tree of a mango tree. Such artificial and false alterations do not bring about any real or substantial changes. Instead, it only serves to create hurdles in the path of that entity's natural development. But those who do not possess any insight in matters concerning collective life and adopt a very superficial perspective in this regard are compelled to think, rather childishly, that bringing about changes in the clothes and some other apparent forms of social etiquette would actually change the destiny of the nation.

The argument that is usually presented in favour of altering the dress code is that it positively changes the mentality of a depressed community. It does away with inactivity and stagnancy to create a momentum within the community. As soon as the clothing associated with that nation's phase of subjugation and decline is cast off, all the internal weaknesses and all those tendencies that were linked to that phase vanish into thin air. No sooner is the new dress put on, especially that borrowed from a developed nation, than there is a spontaneous change in the

psychology and lifestyle of that community. It serves to make them feel progressive, at par with those nations that are leading the race to prosperity. Other nations also begin to consider it as their equal. When it adopts the lifestyle of developed nations, it becomes as sophisticated, active and energetic as those nations, because the attire and lifestyle that has originated in civilized nations should necessarily be adopted to become civilized ourselves. These and many such similar arguments are dished out in support of this act. But these are all superficial ideas, with no study or pragmatic thought to substantiate them. Moreover, the names of many intellectual personalities are cited in their reference, presuming that the names of these personalities would overawe the populace.[1] But the fact remains that the level of understanding and insight of those personalities is no higher than that of those men who cite their references. Those poor souls are as superficial in their perspective and as intellectually challenged as their followers. If an army general has adopted a successful strategy to save his nation in an emergency situation, then he indeed deserves all due accolades and honours for the same. But he should be held in only as much regard as he deserves and only for the feat that he has achieved. To go beyond this and regard him as a thinker, a reformer and an architect of culture and civilization is as stupid as considering an engineer who builds a dam to save a town from flood waters as their ultimate saviour and greatest planner and then go on to hand over the ministries of health and education to him.

In principle, whatever has been written above should be quite sufficient to lay bare the errors contained in the arguments of those who wish to bring about such changes in society. However, it is very difficult to purge the minds of those misunderstandings that have sunk deep within the

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[1] It should be kept in mind that this article was written at a time when the rulers of certain Muslim countries were forcefully changing the clothing of their citizens to make them progressive and some of our own countrymen were lobbying to adopt this recipe for development.

psyche of people on account of the influences of prevalent social trends. Hence, I would now like to elaborate upon my arguments in some detail….

1. It has already been proved that the form and appearance of clothing is not some inflexible preordained thing per se, but the outcome of a blend of various geographical and social factors. If we accept this fact, then it should also be accepted that the specific dress that originates in a particular community as a result of these factors *is* its natural dress. To discard it and adopt a new dress overnight that is not the outcome of the factors we have mentioned is an absolutely unnatural act.

2. The attire of a nation has a deep relation with its social etiquette, and these social etiquettes are in turn intricately associated with its entire cultural life. This association remains intact with the natural changes in the clothing and social etiquette of a nation, because in this case it is the entire society that moves ahead with all its subsets. However, if only the clothing and social etiquettes are forcibly altered in an unnatural manner, or even if only the clothing is changed, then there is a chaos and inconsistency created in the entire collective life. This is because none of the other components of life support this sudden modification and hence tend to fall apart from each other.

3. The beauty and sophistication of a nation's attire as well as it being in tune with progress and development is dependent upon the nation's own collective development and it being a cultured, civilized, enlightened and active nation. The more it progresses on these fronts, the more refined its national attire would get. The progressive spirit of a community would inadvertently take its own natural course to modify and amend whatever is required and adopt certain beneficial things from others to make it a part of its own. To discard this natural way of progressing towards reformation and development by suddenly

replacing one dress with another is an exercise in futility which does not produce any tangible results.

4. To raise the standards of clothing and social etiquette of a community before there is any improvement in its collective condition, and to try to get it to a status that is beyond its actual one is just like making a small child live in a perverted environment and making him eat aphrodisiac food and medicines to forcefully make him reach puberty. This kind of an artificial maturation would create the same adverse effects on his physical and psychological health that a community would undergo if it is made to become more 'cultured' and 'sophisticated' by brute force.
5. To burden a nation with a form of clothing and social etiquette that is way beyond its financial capacity is akin to destroying it. Along with the clothing and etiquette, it would seek to adopt many other things from developed nations, which would render it bankrupt.
6. Clothing, language and script are the most defining features of a nation's identity. If these features of any community are compromised with, then the identity of that community gradually fades away into oblivion, compelling it to merge with those of other communities. All those ancient civilizations that have disappeared from the face of the earth have receded into oblivion owing to the same reason. The oblivion of these communities does not mean that all the members of that community perished without leaving any successive generation to carry on their name. Rather, their oblivion was due to the fact that their national identity was destroyed. They either destroyed the defining features of their community themselves or they allowed those to get destroyed by others. Their members began adopting the clothing, language, script and social etiquettes of other communities. Their identity was eventually extinguished. The same destiny awaits those communities today that are following the

fatal plans of their stupid leaders presuming them to be the harbingers of development and prosperity.

7. The fact that a community borrows and adopts the attire and social etiquettes of another community is actually an outcome and announcement of its inferiority complex. It means that it considers itself low and debased. It has nothing to pride itself upon. Its ancestors were incapable of leaving behind any legacy that it could hold on to without feeling ashamed about it. Its social standard is so low, ideology so weak and so wanting it is in any creativity that it cannot come up with a better lifestyle for itself. In the quest for appearing civilized, it borrows everything from outside and shamelessly announces before the world that all culture, sophistication, beauty and grandeur lies in the lifestyle of others, their standards are the benchmarks of what is acceptable, while we have ourselves been living like animals since several centuries and millennia. We have been unable to produce anything worth showing off, worth adopting or even worth continuing with.

It is quite obvious that the nation that possesses even a speck of dignity would never prefer being an open exhibition of such humiliation and depravity. History, along with the prevalent situation we are facing, bears witness to the fact that a nation accepts this humiliating and embarrassing state in only two conditions:

a. Either it has been thrashed in every field by other nations, and it lays down its arms after a series of defeats. Eg. India, Turkey, Egypt, Iran etc.

b. Or that it really has no national tradition worth priding upon, no original culture or superior creative skill, and it has no rank or position among the nations of the world. Eg. Japan.

8. What a nation should actually borrow from another nation, or things that are even worth borrowing, are the results of its academic research, the fruits of its creative

and innovative pursuits, and those practical techniques that have contributed towards its progress and development. If there is any beneficial lesson that its history, organizational setup and values can offer, then we should definitely obtain the same. We should make a detailed study of the factors behind its success and adopt each and every favourable point. These things form the common resource pool of all humanity; everyone has equal rights over them. To have no value for them, discredit them, or refuse to accept them because of nationalist prejudices is nothing but ignorance. However, it would be nothing but absolute foolishness if instead of adopting these things, we start borrowing the food, clothes and lifestyle of another nation, and regard them as the means of our success. Can an intelligent person ever conclude that the driving forces behind Europe's success are its coats, pants, ties, collars, hats and boots? Or do they owe their success to the forks and spoons that they use to eat their food? Or have the beauty products they use- their powders and lipsticks and cosmetics- been helpful in making them touch the skies? If this is not the case- and it certainly isn't- then why is it that these are the first things that the advocates of reform and development hanker after? Why do they not realize the simple fact that all the grandeur we see in Europe is the result of centuries of sweat and struggle, and that any nation that puts in tireless and devoted efforts would attain the enviable status that Europe has achieved today?

These arguments make it clear that it is completely unnatural and illogical for a nation to adopt the clothing and etiquette of another nation, and it does not make any sense whatsoever. In normal circumstances, it never crosses the mind of a person that he should forsake the lifestyle prevalent in his community for the sake of a foreign lifestyle. Such conditions tend to arise only in abnormal conditions, which can be compared to the strange food

cravings pregnant mothers have or the distorted vision one has in case of an eye ailment.

The Islamic viewpoint

Whatever has been explained hitherto was from a social point of view. Now let us examine this issue in the light of Islamic teachings.

Islam is a natural religion. In each and every matter, it prescribes the way that confirms with rational parameters and is in line with the unblemished nature of human beings. I request you to discard your tainted glasses and have a clear view of the true nature of these issues. While doing so, you would arrive at the very same conclusion that Islam arrives at. Islam does not prescribe any particular dress or lifestyle for human beings; rather, it accepts all those dresses and lifestyles that have evolved and developed following the natural pattern we have discussed earlier. However, it does lay down certain moral and social principles and expects every community to reform their clothing and lifestyles in a way that they confirm to these principles.

The first of these is the minimum portion of the body that needs to be covered (*satr*). Islam considers it a moral obligation for all men, regardless of their nationalities, to cover their bodies from the navel to the knee. Similarly, it makes it compulsory for all women to cover their entire bodies except for the face and hands.[1] In case the dress of a community does not fulfill these conditions, Islam directs it to make the necessary corrections in its attire. Once that community makes those corrections, Islam considers it

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[1] It should be clear that these are the limits of a lady's *satr*, not those of her *hijaab*. *Satr* comprises of those parts that a woman should hide from everyone save her husband… even from her father and son. *Hijaab* is an additional entity in which a distinction is made between close relatives and strangers. Islam does not approve of women making a show of their beauty and ornaments outside the premises of their homes.

sufficient and does not go into the details of its style and pattern.

The second condition that has been laid down in this regard is that men should refrain from wearing silk clothes and gold and silver ornaments. Men and women have been prohibited from wearing clothes that express arrogance, vanity, are flamboyant or catch the eye; so also those clothes that are made to drag on the ground as a mark of pride[1], by means of which one person considers himself greater than the other. Equally prohibited is the attitude of that class of people who usually wear special kinds of clothes to express their superiority over ordinary men or to flaunt it before others in order to overwhelm them or to make an exhibition of their prosperity. Islam does not approve of those loud dresses either, that lead to self-adoration and raking in arrogance and luxury. Once these elements are done away with, then the very dress prevalent in your community would become an 'Islamic dress'.

The third thing that Islam looks upon with disdain in this regard is the adaptation of those specific signs of paganism and idolatry that a particular religious denomination might have made part of its identity. This includes the crucifix, pictures and all those things that would be considered un-Islamic.

In addition to these moral and cultural reforms, Islam also wants its followers to include some special accessories/pattern in their clothes that would make them appear distinct from non-Muslims, so that they might be recognizable and not get mixed up with non-Muslims. This

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[1] A vivid example of this is the robe worn by kings, popes, priests, judges and other such high-ranking people on certain special ceremonies and the gowns worn by brides during their weddings. These clothes are so long that it takes many people to hold them behind them. These are the very clothes about which the Prophet ﷺ had exclaimed: 'On the Day of Judgment, God would not look at the face of the person who, out of pride, lets his clothes drag on the ground while walking'.

would strengthen their internal ties and make them consolidated. Islam has not specified what that special element should be; it has left it to the people to decide. When Islam started spreading in Arabia, the Prophet ﷺ and his companions (God be pleased with them) used to wear the same clothes that all Arabs used to normally wear. However, in order to make the Muslims stand out from the crowd of idolaters, the Prophet ﷺ recommended that Muslims should tie a turban over their caps.[1] This is because the Arabs usually wore either a cap or a turban. This much distinction was considered sufficient to make the members of this new movement appear distinct from the rest of the Arabs. Once all the Arabs accepted Islam, this mark of distinction was no longer required and it soon became redundant, because now the Arab dress itself came to be recognized as an Islamic dress and there was no disbeliever or idolater left who wore such a dress. Similarly, when Islam spread to Iran and other countries, it became necessary for the new Muslims of those lands to either adopt the Arab dress or to include certain distinctive features in their old traditional dress that would allow them to be recognized as Muslims. This need was felt because at that time their traditional attire was that of non-Muslims, and it was difficult for the Muslims to form a separate community without the adoption of such distinctive signs in their clothing. However, once the majority of their citizens came into the fold of Islam and their traditional attire was made to pass through the required amendments that we

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[1] We have a narration recorded in Abu Dawood, Tirmizi and Mustadrak wherein the Prophet ﷺ has said that: 'The thing that distinguishes us from idolaters is the wearing of a turban over our caps'. Some people have understood this to be a permanent edict for all times to come. Accordingly, this act is still considered to be a *Sunnah* by certain people. However, this is merely a result of reading the Hadith out of context. What is actually the *Sunnah* is that if Muslims reside in a community that has non-Muslims in the majority, then they should adopt a special distinctive feature in their clothing.

have mentioned in the above guidelines, then their various national dresses themselves became Islamic dresses. Even in the contemporary era, the traditional attire of those countries where all or most of the residents are Muslims, can all be called 'Islamic attire' despite the variations found therein. As for those places where there is a mixed population of Muslims and non-Muslims, every such dress would be considered an Islamic dress that allows one to distinguish a Muslim from a non-Muslim. Moreover, in places where there is an overwhelming population of non-Muslims, it becomes necessary for every person who accepts Islam to include some distinct feature in his clothing that would make him stand out of the non-Muslim crowd and allow him to be easily recognized as a Muslim.

Tashbiyah (Resemblance)

We now come to the issue of *tashbiyah. Tashbiyah* refers to the act of resembling someone or something. In this context, there are four forms of resemblances possible and each of these has been elaborated upon in the following points along with their corresponding Islamic injunctions:

1. Gender resemblance: This refers to men appearing similar to women and women appearing similar to men. Since this act deviates from nature and is a sign of perverted mentality, Islam strongly condemns it. The Prophet ﷺ has, in no ambiguous words, cursed those men who dress up like women and those women who dress up like men. And surely, every sane person would concur with the Prophet's stand in this regard. Feminine attributes in men and masculine ones in women have always been disdained upon, regardless of their extent. A person naturally feels uneasy whenever he or she comes across such a person.

2. Communal resemblance: This is when an entire nation adopts the clothing of another nation. This, too, is an unnatural and illogical thing to do and happens when

there is a wave of inferiority complex raging throughout the nation. Hence, Islam does not permit it either. The steps taken to curb communal resemblance during the time of the Prophet's companions and the strict manner in which the residents of the overpowered nations were prevented from adopting Arabism speak volumes of the true spirit of Islam.

3. Individual resemblance: This means that certain individuals of a particular community ape the mannerisms of another community. This is an outcome of weakness of character. Those people who adopt such a stance show traits of being impulsive and erratic. They have no firm resolve. Rather, they are similar to a liquid matter that takes the shape of its container. Moreover, this is a despicable act… as despicable as falsely associating your lineage with someone else's family, because in that case the person is trying to depict that he is ashamed of being the son of his father. Equally ignominious is the condition of a person who despite being born in a particular community adopts the clothing of another community in the hope of getting some honour and prestige. By doing so, what he is actually saying is that he feels embarrassed of being associated with the community of his birth and the only way he can get some respect is by being counted among the members of another community. This attitude is faulted from the social perspective as well. Such people relegate their status to those of bats- neither remaining members of the community of their birth, nor of the community they wish to merge into. One is reminded of the 143rd ayat of Surah anNisa, لَا إِلَىٰ هَٰؤُلَاءِ وَلَا إِلَىٰ هَٰؤُلَاءِ *'Wavering between them, [belonging] neither to these, nor to those'*. It is for this reason that the blessed companions of the Prophet ﷺ, especially Umar and Ali (God be pleased with them) had castigated those Arabs who had discarded the traditional Arab Bedouin attire when they started residing in foreign lands and began

wearing the dresses of Romans and Persians upon being influenced by their rich civilizations.

4. <u>Resemblance with disbelievers</u>: This alludes to a Muslim person wearing clothes similar to those of non-Muslims. This is detrimental to the interests of the Muslim community. This leads to estrangement amongst Muslims, precluding the mutual assistance and cooperation in their relations that Islam wishes to build. This also shows that a person has a natural inclination towards non-Muslims despite being a Muslim himself. Such an act is hazardous from the political point of view as well because there is always a danger that Muslims might erroneously treat him as a non-Muslim going by his attire. All this has led to the Prophet ﷺ repeatedly prohibit such a form of resemblance. He has said, *'Adopt a distinction from Jews, Christians and the Magians'*. These words appear in many a Hadith and the intent of the Prophet behind saying this is clearly that Muslims might recognize other Muslims as such and treat them as fellow Muslims. The Prophet had also warned that he would not be responsible for the Muslim person who blends with non-Muslims; which means that if a Muslim soldier mistakes him for a non-Muslim and kills him on the battlefield, that person would himself be responsible for his death. The Hadith, *'He who adopts resemblance of a community would be regarded as belonging to that community'* also alludes to the same principle that a person who adopts the appearance of another community would inadvertently be regarded as belonging to that community and would be treated at par with other members of that community.[1]

Tarjumanul Qur'an
(Zil Qadah 1358 AH/ January 1940 CE)

[1] For further details on this issue, the reader is requested to refer to my book, 'Masla Qaumiyat', pg 96-101

Marriage with the 'People of the Book'

A friend of mine observes that our people are increasingly marrying European ladies on the pretext that marriages with ladies from among the People of the Book have been sanctioned by the Qur'an. He insists that this issue needs to be elucidated in the light of Islamic teachings.

This is undoubtedly a very big issue. The effect of this menace is rather limited in countries like India, Egypt and Syria where the European ladies have penetrated the Islamic social system and eroded Islamic culture from within. In Turkey, however, its political aspects have also proved quite devastating. This is one of the prime reasons for the fall of the Great Ottoman Empire. On this basis, it is but natural for sympathetic Muslims to seek ways to counter this onslaught. However, we are not in favour of amending an established Islamic legal clause by focussing too much on a single aspect of an issue. The One who has revealed the Qur'an is the possessor of ultimate wisdom. His vision encompasses all the issues inherent in every matter with utmost balance and justice. In order to comprehend His commands and juxtapose it properly with our contemporary affairs, it is necessary to expand our vision as much as possible and analyze all the major and minor issues contained therein, and give each of these the due consideration that has been given to it by God.

The ayat of the Qur'an that allows Muslim men to take brides from the People of the Book is as follows:

اَلْيَوْمَ اُحِلَّ لَكُمُ الطَّيِّبٰتُ ۭ وَطَعَامُ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ حِلٌّ لَّكُمْ ۠

وَطَعَامُكُمْ حِلٌّ لَّهُمْ ۡ وَالْمُحْصَنٰتُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنٰتِ وَالْمُحْصَنٰتُ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ

اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ اِذَآ اٰتَيْتُمُوْهُنَّ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ مُحْصِنِيْنَ غَيْرَ مُسٰفِحِيْنَ
وَلَا مُتَّخِذِيْٓ اَخْدَانٍ

"This day all clean things have been made lawful to you. The food of the People of the Book is permitted to you and your food is permitted to them. And (lawful in marriage are) chaste women from among the believers and chaste women from among those who were given the Book before you, provided you become their protectors in wedlock after paying them their bridal-due, rather than going around committing fornication and taking them as secret companions."

[Surah alMaidah ayat 5]

Differences among the Elders

There has been a lot of difference in opinion over the interpretation of this ayat among the elders (*aslaaf*). However, the overwhelming majority of jurists in all ages have preferred to go by the apparent meaning and general application of this ayat. This is because we always need a valid justification to turn away from the apparent meaning of any Qur'anic injunction; and there is no such justification in this case at all. There can be no authority greater in wisdom than the author of the Qur'an. Had He felt the need of a caveat or allowance in His command, He would have definitely added a suitable clause along with the words, 'and chaste women from among those who were given the Book before you'. It is way beyond His grandeur that He should be incapable of using such language while drafting His law which is not even as succinct as that used by our lawmakers. How can it then be possible that His intention was to grant permission for only a particular class of the People of the Book, but the words He employs to convey His command are such that they apply to all the People of the Book in general, with no room for any exception or allowance whatsoever? It is for this reason

that the companions (*sahaba*) of the Prophet ﷺ, their followers (*tabain*) and the elderly scholars have almost been unanimous in regarding this ayat as a general permission to marry women from among the People of the Book. Some of them have even gone ahead and put this ayat into practice. Accordingly, Usman bin Affan (God be pleased with him) has married Nayla bint Farafsah Kalbiyah, who was a Christian lady. Talha bin Ubaidullah married a Syrian Jewess. Huzaifah bin Yamaan, Ka'ab bin Malik, Mugairah bin Shu'bah and quite a few other distinguished companions (God be pleased with them all) have either married ladies from the People of the Book or have sent them marriage proposals.

The ruling of Abdullah Ibn Umar (God be pleased with him)

Abdullah ibn Umar (God be pleased with him and his father) is the only companion who has explicitly ruled that marriage with ladies from the People of the Book is impermissible. He says that God has prohibited us from marrying polytheist women in the 221st ayat of Surah alBaqarah, wherein He says, وَلَا تَنكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكَٰتِ حَتَّىٰ يُؤْمِنَّ "*And do not marry polytheistic women until they believe*", and I do not know of any polytheistic practice greater than regarding Jesus or any other human being as God. On this basis, he invalidates all those ladies from the People of the Book who subscribe to disbelief or polytheism. He has interpreted *alMuhsanatu* (chaste women) as *alMuslimatu* (Muslim women). He thus understands this ayat to mean that it is permissible for you to marry even those women who belong to the People of the Book provided they have accepted Islam. But in this particular case, the opinion of Abdullah ibn Umar is not appropriate. We shall explain in brief why we are saying so:

God has Himself enumerated all the polytheistic beliefs of the People of the Book in the Qur'an. For instance, their belief that إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ '*Allah is the*

Messiah, the son of Mary' (Surah alMaidah ayat 72) and إِنَّ اللّٰهَ ثَالِثُ ثَلٰثَةٍ *'Allah is the third of the three'* (Surah alMaidah ayat 73) and قَالَتِ الْيَهُوْدُ عُزَيْرُ ابْنُ اللّٰهِ وَقَالَتِ النَّصٰرَى الْمَسِيْحُ ابْنُ اللّٰهِ *'The Jews say that Ezra is the son of Allah, and the Christians say that the Messiah is the son of Allah'* (Surah atTaubah ayat 30). He has even associated the words *kufr* (disbelief) and *shirk* (polytheism) with them. But He has never used the terminology of '*Mushrik*' (polytheist) to refer to them. They have always been mentioned in the Qur'an as 'People of the Book' or something of that import.

We can clearly identify three distinct groups in the Qur'an- one consisting of Polytheists and Disbelievers (referring to those who are not in possession of any divine guidance- whether corrupted or uncorrupted), the second comprising of the People of the Book (who continue to believe in some or the other prophet and revealed divine book, despite having gone astray in ideology and practice), and the third one composed of Believers (which alludes to the followers of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, regardless of whether they have been born in a Muslim household, or have entered Islam from the group of the People of the Book or have escaped the group of disbelievers and polytheists to become Muslims). The Qur'an maintains a clear demarcation between these groups and never mixes them up. It never says 'People of the Book' to refer to polytheists or says 'polytheists' to refer to the People of the Book; nor does it say 'O you who have been given the Scripture' while referring to Muslims.

Thus, when God has prohibited a marital alliance by saying 'do not marry *alMushrikaat* (polytheistic women)' and has permitted marriage elsewhere by saying 'and (lawful in marriage are) chaste women from among those who were given the Book before you', then it should be accepted that in the former ayat '*alMushrikaat*' refers to women belonging to idolaters and other such communities that do not come under the purview of 'People of the

Book', while the latter ayat refers to the ladies of those non-Muslim communities that were in possession of divine books that predate the Qur'an. If this interpretation is not adopted, then it necessary follows that two ayaat of the Qur'an clash with each other. This issue cannot be resolved by insisting that 'chaste women from among those who were given the Book before you' refers to those ladies who abandoned their Jewish or Christian faiths and accepted Islam or those ladies from the People of the Book who were not involved in disbelief or polytheism. This is because:

1. God has already said *'chaste women from among the believers'* before saying *'chaste women from among those who were given the Book'*; and we know that *'chaste women from among the believers'* does not only refer to those ladies who were born as Muslims, but also includes all those women who have left their parent religion and accepted Islam. Thus, when marriage with believing women had already been permitted (which essentially includes even those women who had been Jewish or Christian before accepting Islam), then what was the need for additionally specifying *'and chaste women from among those who were given the Book'*? If we go by Ibn Umar's interpretation, this clause is rendered absolutely meaningless and an unnecessary addition.
2. The sentence preceding this command says that the food of the People of the Book is permitted to you. Does the phrase 'People of the Book' used here also refer to those Muslims who were previously Jews or Christians? If not, then how does it become appropriate to adopt two different interpretations of the same phrase, 'People of the Book' appearing in the same ayat?
3. Is there any sect within the Jews or Christians that is not involved in disbelief or polytheism? They do not have any correct idea of God and there is no way left

for them to obtain it. The original teachings of Moses and Jesus that they had have been corrupted. This being the case, how could any of their sects have been properly guided? Thus, this assumption that *'chaste women from among those who were given the Book'* refers to women from some Jewish or Christian sect that is on true guidance is absolutely wrong. As for those ayaat of the Qur'an that lead one to presume that there were some people of true faith from within them as well, they actually refer to those People of the Book who had accepted the guidance offered by the Prophet ﷺ owing to the purity of their hearts and their unblemished nature, or those who were very close to accepting the same.

4. Even if, for the sake of argument, it is assumed that there did exist such a sect within the Jews and Christians, the words of the ayat: *'those who were given the Book before you'* have nothing to suggest that this command is specific to only those sects, and that all the other People of the Book have been left out of its ambit. Then why should we unnecessarily investigate into the beliefs of the People of the Book and decide for ourselves which of their women are permissible for marriage and which aren't?

Those who have concurred with the views of Abdullah ibn Umar (God be pleased with him) derive support from the ayat, وَلَا تُمْسِكُوا بِعِصَمِ الْكَوَافِرِ *"Do not hold on to your marriages with unbelieving women"* [Surah alMumtahinah ayat 10]. But this ayat has specifically been revealed addressing those men and women who have migrated from enemy lands (*Darul Harb*) to the land of Islam (*Darul Islam*) and whose wives/husbands have continued to remain as disbelievers in the enemy land. The purpose of the ayat is to convey that their previous marriages get annulled as soon as they migrate to the land of Islam, and that the migrant men and women are now free to marry afresh. This is the specific

meaning of this ayat according to its original historic context. But if someone does wish to take these words in the general sense, we would like to tell him that even if a general command had been issued in the ayat, *'Do not hold on to your marriages with unbelieving women'*, then elsewhere ('chaste women from among those who were given the Book') it was said that a specific group from amongst the unbelievers, i.e. the People of the Book have been exempted from this general command. If you are not willing to agree that the former general command has been made specific by the latter, then you are indirectly trying to say that God indulges in contradictory statements-permitting an act at one place and prohibiting the same at another. God forbid!

The ruling of Abdullah Ibn Abbas (God be pleased with him)

The second companion, after Abdullah ibn Umar, who has tried to impose limitations on the permissibility of marrying ladies from the People of the Book, is Abdullah ibn Abbas. He is of the opinion that this command is limited only to *dhimmi* ladies. This means that marriage is permissible with only those Jewish and Christian ladies who are citizens of an Islamic state, regardless of the corruption in their beliefs. It is, however, impermissible to marry those ladies who live beyond the boundaries of the Islamic state.

To support his view, he cites the 29th ayat of Surah atTaubah in which God has commanded the Muslims to wage war against such people:

قَاتِلُوا الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَلَا بِالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَلَا يُحَرِّمُوْنَ مَا حَرَّمَ اللّٰهُ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ وَلَا يَدِيْنُوْنَ دِيْنَ الْحَقِّ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ حَتّٰى يُعْطُوا الْجِزْيَةَ عَنْ يَّدٍ وَّهُمْ صٰغِرُوْنَ ۝٢٩

"Fight those who do not believe in Allah or in the Last Day and who do not consider unlawful what Allah and

His Messenger have made unlawful and who do not adopt the religion of truth from those who were given the Scripture – (fight) until they give the jizyah willingly while they are humbled."

God has also said (in the 22nd ayat of Surah alMujadilah) that it does not behove believers to love those who are enemies of God and his messenger:

لَا تَجِدُ قَوْمًا يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ يُوَآدُّوْنَ مَنْ حَآدَّ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ

"You will not find a people who believe in Allah and the Last Day having affection for those who oppose Allah and His Messenger."

On the other hand, God has established marital ties on the very foundations of love and mercy, as He says in the 21st ayat of Surah Ruum:

خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ اَنْفُسِكُمْ اَزْوَاجًا لِّتَسْكُنُوْٓا اِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَّوَدَّةً وَّرَحْمَةً

"And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquillity in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy."

He concludes that since the bond of marriage requires love and sincere emotions, and it is impermissible to maintain ties of love with belligerent polytheists and People of the Book, and because we have also been commanded to fight them, it naturally entails that it is impermissible to marry their women.

This opinion of Abdullah ibn Abbas (God be pleased with him) has not been accepted by the majority of companions, their followers and jurists. There is a unanimous consensus in declaring marriage with women from those People of the Book who reside in *Darul Harb* (enemy lands) and *Darul Kufr* (land of disbelievers) as detestable (*makrooh*), albeit none of them has gone a step further to declare it impermissible. This is because the phrase, *'chaste women from among those who were given the Book'* does not differentiate between the belligerent and

the non-belligerent, with God setting no reservations in this regard. Hence, as far as its legal sanction is concerned, its status should be maintained on the very premise found in the ayat of the Qur'an. It is a completely different matter that it might be inappropriate to marry them on the basis of certain strategic national issues or personal disinclinations. We are not allowed to declare a permissible act as impermissible. What we *are* allowed to do is to refrain from indulging in an otherwise permissible act in view of some specific condition or reason. This is because an act being permissible does not, of course, mean that it is a mandatory command.

The majority consensus and their mutual differences

After rejecting the views of Abdullah ibn Umar and Abdullah ibn Abbas (God be pleased with them), those who take the ayat under discussion in the general sense have had mutual differences based on the interpretation of only two terms: *alMuhsanatu* and *Allazina utul Kitaab*.

There is one group that takes the term *muhsanatu* to refer to 'chaste woman'. Another group says that this term alludes to that woman who is free and not a slave. Thus, according to the first group, marriage is permissible with only those ladies from the People of the Book who are pure, chaste and virtuous. Vulgar and promiscuous women are not included in this definition. The second group insists that it is impermissible to marry slave women from among the People of the Book, even if they are chaste; and it is permissible to marry free women from the People of the Book, even if they are unchaste.

Moreover, there is a difference of opinion on which groups can be included under the umbrella term, 'People of the Book'. Imam Shafi'i avers that only those Jews and Christians who trace their lineage to the Children of Israel are included therein, not those who belong to other communities and have later accepted Judaism or

Christianity. This is because Moses and Jesus (Peace be upon them) had been sent exclusively to the Children of Israel. The other communities were never their addressees. Those subscribing to the Hanafi school of jurisprudence and the vast majority of jurists opine that every such community that believes in some prophet and some divinely revealed book would be included in 'People of the Book'. They do not restrict this definition to Jews and Christians alone. Had there been a group who believed in the Abrahamic scriptures or in the Psalms revealed to Prophet David, they would also have been included in the list of 'People of the Book'. A small section of elders have also inclined towards the idea that if a particular community is in possession of a book about which it can be assumed that it is a divinely revealed one, then that community would also be included in this list, e.g. the Zoroastrians. Certain self-certified jurists of our times have cited this very opinion to include Hindus, Jains and Buddhists in this list as well. They then consider it permissible to marry their women, arguing that some or the other prophet must have definitely been sent to them, and some or the other book must have also been revealed to those prophets.

The Correct Opinion

Among all these opinions, the one that is most correct is that the term, 'People of the Book' includes only Jews and Christians, whether they owe their lineage to the Children of Israel or not. The Qur'an refers to both groups as People of the Book. At one place it has also specified that these two groups alone are the People of the Book:

وَهٰذَا كِتٰبٌ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ مُبٰرَكٌ فَاتَّبِعُوْهُ وَاتَّقُوْا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُوْنَ ﴿۱۵۵﴾ اَنْ تَقُوْلُوْٓا اِنَّمَآ اُنْزِلَ الْكِتٰبُ عَلٰى طَآئِفَتَيْنِ مِنْ قَبْلِنَا ۥ

"And likewise We have revealed this Book- a blessed one. Follow it, then, and become God-fearing, that you

may be shown mercy. (You may no longer) say now that the Book was revealed only to two groups of people before us." *[Surah alAn'am ayaat 155,156].*

Since all the other communities that had been given divinely revealed books have completely lost their original Book, and their beliefs and ideologies today show no sign of prophetic teachings, they cannot be referred to as 'People of the Book'. This is why the Prophet ﷺ has not referred to Zoroastrians as People of the Book, despite the fact that they believe in Zoroaster, about whom it is assumed that he was a prophet. When the case of the Zoroastrians belonging to Hijr was brought before him, the Prophet ﷺ had said that, "Treat them like you treat the People of the Book", not that they are indeed the People of the Book. Moreover, the letter the Prophet ﷺ wrote them explicitly mentioned that:

"If you accept Islam, you would be entitled to the same rights as us, and you would have the same obligations as us. The jizyah would be levied upon those of you who refuse to accept Islam, but neither would we partake in the meat of their slaughtered animals nor marry their women."

After this clarification, there remains no scope of including non-Jews and non-Christians in the list of People of the Book, either with respect to eating the meat of their slaughtered animals or marrying their chaste women.

The condition of being an Israelite that has been suggested by Imam Shafi'i is not correct either. There is no doubt about the fact that the addressees of Moses and Jesus were none but the Children of Israel. But God and His messenger ﷺ have included in the category of 'People of the Book' even those non-Israelites who had later accepted Christianity. Accordingly, the letter that the Prophet ﷺ had written to the Roman Caesar had this ayat in it:

يٰٓاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ تَعَالَوْا اِلٰى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَآءٍۢ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ

O People of the Book come to a word that is common between us and you". [Surah Aal-e-Imran ayat 64]

Here, the Roman Christians have been addressed to as 'O People of the Book' despite the fact that the Romans were not Israelites.

Those who have taken the meaning of the word '*muhsinat*' as chaste and unblemished, and have ruled that only those ladies from among the People of the Book can be married who are chaste and unblemished, are mistaken in their ruling. I agree that the Arabic word *ihsaan* includes in its meaning purity, chastity and being virtuous, and the word *muhsinat* indeed does refer to those women who are chaste, virtuous and respectable. But God's intention in using this word here is not to declare it as a precondition to marriage, but to merely show preference of choice. What God is actually saying is that while you are free to marry all women from among the believers and the People of the Book, you should prefer chaste and virtuous women from amongst them. There are many instances in the Qur'an where we do find such restrictions, but they do not serve as preconditions for the concerned command. Rather, they act as additional conditions to make evident the preferable aspects of a legitimate act and the despised aspects of an illegitimate act, so that believers might adopt the preferable and shun the despised ones. This is exactly the same rule that Caliph Umar (God be pleased with him) has adopted in this regard. The companion, Huzaifah bin Yamaan (God be pleased with him) married a Jewess. When Umar was informed of this marriage, he asked Huzaifah bin Yamaan to divorce her. He asked him on what basis he was issuing this command. Was it impermissible to marry a lady from the People of the Book? Umar replied that it was not impermissible per se, but I fear that you people might marry the licentious women among them.

Hence, of all the views that have been put forth in this regard, the view that seems most appropriate to me is to uphold the general permissibility of marrying women from

the People of the Book, regardless of whether she belongs to an enemy land or is a *dhimmi*, whether she is chaste or otherwise, and whether she is free or a bondwoman.

Social and Religious Implications

What we have so far discussed are only the legal aspects of this issue. We shall now discuss its social and religious implications. What is the correct and appropriate approach and what are the expectations of the spirit of *deen*?

The Islamic Concept of Marriage

According to Islam, marriage is not just a social contract... unlike what it is commonly misunderstood to be. Rather, there is a religious sanctity attached to it. Although this sanctity does not reach the levels of sacrament as is the case with Hindus and Christians, but it is definitely counted as a form of worship. The intention is not only to seek social and cultural benefits from this tie, but religious and spiritual ones as well. Among the objectives of marriage are reformation of one's character, purity of society as well as the establishment, perpetuation, progress and development of a purely Islamic social system. It is intended at giving birth to generations of such people who would exalt the name of God and establish His commands. Marriage has been given the status of worship for the sole reason that it serves as a medium to achieve these objectives. Some jurists have even gone as far as saying that: 'From certain angles, marriage is superior to *jihad*. This is because marriage and *jihad* are both means of existence of Muslims and Islam, but the benefits derived from the marital union of Muslims are much more than those derived from *jihad*. The most that can be expected from *jihad* is that disbelievers would either be killed or continue to live as non-Muslim *dhimmis* (protected subjects of an Islamic state). On the contrary, the only outcome of

Muslims marrying each other is that the moral character of an entire generation of Muslims is secured and a new generation of Muslims is raised."

In order to completely understand the Islamic perspective in this regard, we need to run a glance over those aHadith that delve upon the topic of marriage. Abu Ya'ala has included a Hadith in his collection which says that the Prophet ﷺ once happened to ask Akkaf bin Wadda'at alHalali, 'Have you got married?' He replied in the negative. The Prophet asked him if he at least had a slave girl. Akkaf again replied in the negative. The Prophet asked him, 'Are you healthy and well-to-do?' He said, 'Yes, I am'. At this, the Prophet remarked, 'In that case, you are either from among the brothers of Satan or among the Christians. If you wish to be a part of our brotherhood, then you need to do as we do; and our practice includes marriage. The worst among you are those who remain single (bachelors) and the worst among your dead are those who die unmarried.'

There's another Hadith which says that 'Get married, increase your progeny and inflate your numbers thereby, because on the day of resurrection I want to see you outnumber other communities.'

At another instance, the Prophet ﷺ said, 'There are four things that if a person were to receive them he would have received all the blessings of the world and the hereafter. These are: a heart that is grateful to God, a tongue that remembers God, a body that perseveres against all odds, and a wife who does not tend to breach her chastity or transgress upon her husband's wealth.' [Tabrani]

He ﷺ has also said, 'Those who wish to meet God in a pure state should marry chaste women.' [Ibn Majah]

In another Hadith recorded by Ibn Majah, the Prophet ﷺ has instructed thus: 'Do not marry women for their

beauty; it is possible that their beauty would spoil them. Do not marry them for their wealth either; it is possible that their wealth would make them rebellious. What you should rather seek in them is their *deen* (piety and righteousness). A dark complexioned dim-witted slave girl who is pious and righteous is much better than other women'.

There are several such aHadith that tell us that the Islamic objective of marriage is not just the fulfilment of a social requirement. Instead, the most important purpose is to safeguard oneself, ensure the purity of one's character, the propagation of Islamic culture and to give birth to an upright Muslim generation. To meet this purpose it is not just sufficient that Muslim men should get married, but it is also equally important that their marriages are solemnised with women who are Muslim, pious, righteous, chaste and virtuous. This is because a morally sound Islamic society can be expected only from the union of such men and women, and an upright Muslim generation can be expected from the wombs of such mothers alone.

Mixed Marriages

The Islamic point of view notwithstanding, even when this issue is viewed from a purely social perspective, we would be compelled to admit that there is nothing that spoils the social order and family life more than the practice of mixed marriages. A couple whose thought processes are poles apart from each other and who have been raised in two completely different environments, having cultures and traditions as dissimilar as chalk and cheese can neither find peace and solace in their own lives (given to their mutual disagreements), nor can they make their home the subset of a righteous society, nor can they give birth to children who can easily blend with any particular culture. It is quite possible that there would remain bonds of love between them till the very end. But their mutual love and companionship can be the cause of their personal pleasure alone; there being no greater social

benefit to it. Leave alone differences of religion and community, even class differences within the same society prove detrimental to the success of family life and the development of the social system. Disputes arise even if one of the two is from a city and the other belongs to a village. In order to ensure a happy married life, it is necessary that there are as many common terms and factors between the spouses and their respective families as possible. It is not just sufficient for their religion to be the same. Rather, it is also important that their social norms be alike, there should be a similarity in their thinking and lifestyle, they should have the same social and financial status and that their family traditions resemble each other. This compatibility is exactly what has been referred to as '*kafa'at*' in Islamic law. The importance God has given to compatibility in marital matters is for no other reason than that there ought to be as many common grounds between the couple as possible. This is because mutual compatibility is not just a source of love and compassion for the couple itself, but it benefits the entire society at large, and the betterment of future generations is also hinged upon it. The union of those spouses who show a lack of compatibility is merely a physical union, which proves to be almost- or at times absolutely- barren from the cultural and social point of view.

The hazards of inter-religious marriages

The problems associated with mutual incompatibility are limited to the dilution of love and compassion between the couple and the resultant lack of contribution to society. But the hazards of inter-religious or inter-communal marriage go way beyond these. The greatest concern of such marriages is that the child who is nurtured by a non-Muslim mother would be of no use to Islamic society with regards his religious and moral upbringing. Moreover, there is a possibility that she would introduce un-Islamic practices in a Muslim household, affecting all those families that are related to theirs. Even her husband would

not remain untouched from this negative influence. If he is madly in love with her, there is an imminent danger of him forsaking Islam as well. And even if this problem does not assume such grave proportions, he would at least be turned into a mute spectator to the breakdown of many an Islamic value and tradition in his house. When viewed from the political lens, such marriages have often proved to be part of a conspiracy or a form of espionage, wherein the non-Muslim bride of a Muslim household can very easily be used to spy on the Islamic state; and if she is cunning enough, she might even use her husband as an unassuming tool to meet her sinister ends. These are those hazards that have been witnessed in the past, and are being witnessed today as well. Who is to blame for the contamination of our Indian Muslim society by means of pagan rites and rituals? The burden of guilt lies on those very women who have entered our Muslim families while remaining firm on their polytheistic ideas or those who have only superficially become Muslim. Who has spoilt the *deen* and morals of Muslim generations? The very mothers who have fed Muslim kids the milk of polytheism and paganism! Who were the culprits behind the dissolution of Islamic governments? It was usually the love of those disbelieving women that had blinded the Muslim monarchs to fall into decline. Even today, who is it that is eroding the very foundations of Islamic society? To a large extent, this credit goes to the rule of those Western women that is reigning over our elite class.

The balance witnessed in Islamic marital law

A person might contend that if this is indeed the case, then marriages with non-Muslims should have been prohibited outright. Why has Islam permitted it then? In order to understand the answer to this question, we need to look at the other aspect of this issue. Only then would we be able to appreciate the true wisdom of Islamic law and the sublime form of balance and justice contained therein.

When man brings in a law, he tends to incline towards one aspect of the matter to such an extent that he fails to bring its other aspects into consideration. At times he stresses more on the communal aspects and neglects its individual implications. At other times, he makes so many allowances for the individual that the communal interests get completely ignored. But the wisdom of Islam is such that it takes into consideration all its aspects and gives each of them as much space and allowance as they truly deserve. As we have mentioned earlier, the interests of the community- and to a great extent those of the individual as well- lie in Muslim men marrying only Muslim women, along with ensuring that they are compatible with each other. Accordingly, the concept of status compatibility (*kafa'at*) was introduced.

"Seek good wombs for your sperms and marry among those people who share your status." *[Hadith]*

It was also made amply clear that the first and most important point that needs to be compatible is *deen*.

وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ ۚ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنكَرِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَيُطِيعُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ ۚ

"Believing men and believing women are allies of one another. They enjoin good, forbid evil, establish prayer, pay zakat, and obey Allah and His messenger." *[Surah atTaubah ayat 71]*

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا

"O you who believe, save yourselves and your families from the fire of hell." *[Surah atTahreem ayat 6]*

وَمَن لَّمْ يَسْتَطِعْ مِنكُمْ طَوْلًا أَن يَنكِحَ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ فَمِن مَّا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُم مِّن فَتَيَاتِكُمُ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِإِيمَانِكُم ۚ بَعْضُكُم مِّن بَعْضٍ ۚ

"And those of you who cannot afford to marry chaste believing women, let them marry such believing

women whom your right hands possess. Allah knows all about your faith. All of you belong to one another."
[Surah anNisa ayat 25]

"Marry them for their faith, because a dark complexioned dim-witted slave girl who is pious and righteous is much better than other women." [Hadith]

On the other hand, there were certain individual considerations that precluded the absolute prohibition of marrying non-Muslim women. It might so happen that a person might fall in love with a non-Muslim lady and seeing that there is no legitimate way open for him to fulfil his carnal desires he may adopt illegitimate ways to do so. It might also be possible that a person resides in such an area where there are no Muslim women, and there is a genuine risk of his character getting spoilt and family life getting affected if he continues to remain a bachelor. It was thus necessary to allow for certain concessions in the light of such situations. Islam has entertained these individual concessions, but with the caveat that they should cause as little damage to community interests as possible.

Prohibition on a Muslim lady marrying a non-Muslim man

The first thing that was done in this regard was to allow only Muslim men to marry non-Muslim women. Muslim women have not been allowed to marry non-Muslim men at all.

In the 10th ayat of Surah alMumtahinah, God lays down the following instruction:

لَا هُنَّ حِلٌّ لَّهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحِلُّونَ لَهُنَّ

'Those (Muslim) women are no longer lawful to the unbelievers, nor are those unbelievers lawful to those (Muslim) women.'

This is because ladies have a flexible nature. They tend to get adapted to their surrounding environment instead of

adapting the environment to their needs. She gets easily influenced by men and is almost always subservient to her husband in all matters of family life. There is a 90% risk that if a Muslim lady marries a non-Muslim man, she would be permanently cut off from Islam and Islamic culture. And there is a 100% risk that the child she bears would become a part of the non-Muslim community. All these risks were so overwhelming in nature that it was deemed best not to allow Muslim ladies to enter into marital ties with non-Muslim men. The window of concession was left open only for Muslim men because of the aforementioned reasons.

Restrictions regarding Muslims marrying non-Muslim ladies

Moreover, the permissibility of Muslims marrying non-Muslim ladies is not absolute. The non-Muslims have been classified into two categories in this regard:

1. That group that is miles away from Islam and its culture; whose ideology, lifestyle and social and moral laws do not resemble those of Muslims in any manner.
2. That group that is closest to Muslims from among all non-Muslims. This group believes in prophethood and revelation to some extent. The faith it has in God and the Day of Judgment also resembles that of Muslims in some measure. Its moral values and social laws bear an indelible mark of past prophetic teachings.

Of these two groups, Muslims were strictly prohibited from marrying anyone from the first one:

وَلَا تَنْكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكٰتِ حَتّٰى يُؤْمِنَّ ۭ وَلَاَمَةٌ مُّؤْمِنَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ مُّشْرِكَةٍ وَّلَوْ اَعْجَبَتْكُمْ ۚ وَلَا تُنْكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ حَتّٰى يُؤْمِنُوْا ۭ وَلَعَبْدٌ مُّؤْمِنٌ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ مُّشْرِكٍ وَّلَوْ اَعْجَبَكُمْ ۭ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ يَدْعُوْنَ اِلَى النَّارِ ښ وَاللّٰهُ يَدْعُوْٓا اِلَى الْجَنَّةِ وَالْمَغْفِرَةِ بِاِذْنِهٖ ۚ

'Marry not the women who associate others with Allah in His divinity until they believe; for a believing slave-

girl is better than a woman who associates others with Allah in His divinity, even though she might please you. Likewise, do not give your women in marriage to men who associate others with Allah in His divinity until they believe; for a believing slave is better than a man who associates others with Allah in His divinity, even though he might please you. Such people call you towards the fire, and Allah calls you, by His leave, towards Paradise and forgiveness; and He makes His injunctions clear to people so that they might take heed.' *[Surah alBaqarah ayat 221]*

Permission to marry ladies from among the People of the Book

As for the second of the two groups, Muslim men have been permitted to marry its ladies. But at the same time they were cautioned against the inherent dangers of doing so. This allowance has been granted only to ensure that they might not indulge in profanities.

وَالْمُحْصَنٰتُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنٰتِ وَالْمُحْصَنٰتُ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ اِذَاۤ اٰتَيْتُمُوْهُنَّ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ مُحْصِنِيْنَ غَيْرَ مُسٰفِحِيْنَ وَلَا مُتَّخِذِيْۤ اَخْدَانٍ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّكْفُرْ بِالْاِيْمَانِ فَقَدْ حَبِطَ عَمَلُهٗ ؗ وَهُوَ فِى الْاٰخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ۝۵

'And (lawful in marriage are) chaste women from among those who were given the Book before you, provided you become their protectors in wedlock after paying them their bridal-due, rather than going around committing fornication and taking them as secret companions. The work of he who refuses to follow the Way of faith will go to waste, and he will be among the utter losers in the Hereafter.'

[Surah alMaidah ayat 5]

The concluding clause of this ayat is worth contemplating over. Here, we have a clear word of caution that marrying non-Muslim women poses a risk of losing

one's faith. It is but obvious that if such a dangerous thing has been made permissible it should be practised only in extraordinary circumstances and only if there is indeed an express need to do so.

The despicability of marrying ladies from among the People of the Book

Those who were completely aware of the spirit of Islamic law have always regarded this permission as a mere allowance for this very reason. Hence, they have never preferred the practice of Muslims marrying ladies from among the People of the Book. Caliph Umar (God be pleased with him) was the greatest scholar of Islam of his time. The letter he had written to Huzaifah bin Yamaan (God be pleased with him) throws ample light over the objectives of Islamic law. The age was that of Islam's supremacy. Muslims were residing in Syria in the capacity of rulers and victors. The matter pertained to a distinguished companion who had had his faith nurtured under the personal care of the Prophet ﷺ. Who could have been capable of outdoing him in Islamic morals and etiquette? Despite this, Umar asked him to discontinue his marital alliance with a Jewess. He did not defend his stand by saying that it was impermissible for Muslims to marry ladies from the People of the Book; rather, he feared that it posed a risk of promiscuous women from the People of the Book entering Muslim households. Hence, it was most appropriate not to take recourse to this allowance.

Please think over it- if this is Islam's stance in a state of dominance, then what should be its stance when a Muslim is dominated by and subservient to disbelievers, and residing in their society? In such a condition, the despicability of marrying a lady from the People of the Book should be more intense, because its hazards become manifold in the land of disbelievers. It is for this reason that Islamic scholars have overwhelmingly regarded such

marriages as detestable (*makrooh*), and all the more despicable in the land of disbelievers.

The leading scholar of Islam, Sarakhsi writes in his book, alMabsoot:

"While it is permissible for Muslim men to marry women from among the People of the Book in an enemy state, it is nevertheless detestable to do so. This is because if he marries in that land, it is quite possible that he would continue to reside in that country... and the child that lady bears him would be imbibed with pagan values. There are many issues besides this. Hence it is detested. When Ali (God be pleased with him) was asked about marriage with ladies belonging to enemy lands, he replied that it was detestable."

[Vol 5, page 50]

Imam Ibn Jarir Tabri writes in his exegesis of the Qur'an:

"It is permissible to marry both- the lady who is a subject of an Islamic state as well as she who is a resident of an enemy state, provided that the groom does not reside in a place where there is an impending danger of his children being compelled into disbelief."

[Vol 6 page 61]

It has been mentioned in Hidayah that:

"While it is indeed permissible to marry ladies from among the People of the Book, it is not advisable to marry them or to partake in the meat of their slaughter if there is no compelling need to do so. And it is absolutely detestable to marry those ladies from among the People of the Book who reside in an enemy state, because this opens up the doors to corruption. It might so happen that the Muslim man would develop so deep relations with his non-Muslim wife that he would continue to reside with her in the enemy land and that his children would be groomed according to the values of the disbelievers." *[Kitab alNikah]*

This discussion makes it clear that it is not appropriate to declare ladies from among the People of the Book prohibited or invalid for marriage. However, in light of the spirit of Islamic law and the unanimous opinion of the respectable scholars of Islam, we arrive at the conclusion that it is nevertheless detestable, and much more detestable and despicable in case the marriage happens to take place in a land dominated and ruled by disbelievers. We also derive from the action taken by Caliph Umar that just as the matter regarding marriage with ladies from among the People of the Book is concerned, in all such matters where Islamic law has provided us with certain allowances but which have an inherent risk of being grossly misused, the Islamic governor has the right to issue an ordinance against the use of that allowance. Such an ordinance does not make what is permissible impermissible or what is lawful unlawful, but the authority that passes such an ordinance should have the necessary understanding of Islamic law so as to preserve the element of balance contained therein.

Tarjumanul Qur'an
Muharram 1356 AH

Chopping off the Hand & other Islamic Penalties

[This is not an independent essay, but a note that had been written to supplement an article written by a gentleman in Tarjumanul Qur'an]

1. The first rule that needs to be understood in the context of penalties is that the sentence concerning severing of the convict's hand and other such Islamic penalties can be carried out only in such places where there exists an Islamic government and the organizational structure of that society and culture mirror the one that has been espoused by Islam. Islamic laws and principles are indivisible; it is inappropriate to abide by some cherry-picked laws and principles and abandon certain others.

   Take, for instance, the punishments for fornication, adultery and slander.[1] There is a deep relation between these punishments and the Islamic laws regarding marriage, divorce and the veil, as also the Islamic guidelines regarding sexual conduct, which cannot be overlooked. The society for which God has instituted such severe punishments is the one where women do not roam the streets uncovered, where there is no display of nude and semi-nude pictures or publication of vulgar literature or the staging of plays and movies that keep arousing carnal desires. These laws are instead meant for such societies where marriages are a matter of convenience, and all the Islamic injunctions concerning divorce, separation and dissolution of

[1] The word *qazf* has already been translated in text as slander. There is no need of a footnote here.

marriage are duly implemented. Such a society rightfully deserves the institution of strict punishments that would safeguard the social balance it has achieved. Moreover, there is no way such strict punishments can be deemed infringing upon the principles of justice in a society where it has been made exceedingly convenient to satisfy one's sexual desires in a lawful manner and the surroundings have been purged of all forms of lecherous avenues and sexually explicit content. In such an environment, sexual crimes can be committed only by those people whose minds are hopelessly perverted. It then becomes necessary to protect the society from the evil of these men by means of such severe punishments that might act as deterrents for others.

However, it would be absolutely beyond the premises of justice to institute such severe penalties for sexual misconduct and slander in societies where young men and women are allowed to freely intermingle in colleges, offices, clubs and recreation centres with no sense of restraint, where the environment is a collage of licentious opportunities, where all avenues of extra-marital relationships are wide open and where the moral standards have become so low that no one raises an eyebrow on illicit relationships. Even a normal person having a good and balanced nature would find it difficult to save himself from giving in to the sexual overtures of such a perverted society. Hence, even if a person does indulge in sexual crimes, it would not be appropriate to conclude that he is an abnormally promiscuous person. The punishments of stoning to death and lashes have not been prescribed in such deplorable conditions at all.

Same is the case with the penalty for theft. The punishment of chopping off the hand of the thief has been instituted only for that society where the Islamic economic ideology, principles and laws have been

firmly established. The punishment for theft and the Islamic economic system are intricately linked with each other. Wherever this economic system is in vogue, this penalty for theft becomes an essential part of justice and the very call of human nature. As for those places that are bereft of this economic system, chopping off the hand of the thief becomes a double injustice. In fact, this penalty has not at all been prescribed for such an unjust society where interest transactions are held permissible, where there is no system of *zakaat*, where justice is sold as a commodity and where taxes have broken the backs of the common man, making life constrained for him and luxurious only for a specific class that revels in this tax money. In such a society, even sentencing a thief to prison would possibly be counted as injustice, let alone chopping his hand off.

The reason why people usually falter in understanding Islamic criminal law is because they tend to compare the validity of Islamic penalties of stoning to death and lashes vis-a-vis the crimes of theft, fornication, adultery, slander and alcohol abuse in the backdrop of the corrupted society found in today's 'civilized' countries, where these crimes are seemingly 'part of popular culture'. It is but obvious that such a misguided comparison leads them to conclude that Islamic penalties are extremely severe and dreadful in nature. This is because it is their own subconscious that tells them that in the wake of the appalling conditions this lifestyle has given rise to, theft should be routinely expected, that the overwhelming majority of men, women and even kids and elderly people can naturally be expected to indulge in sexual misconduct, that it should come as no surprise if rumour mills are working overtime in publishing gossip about couples engaged in illicit relationships or that kids are getting spoilt in bad company and turning towards substance

abuse. Hence, they start shivering at the thought that if Islamic criminal laws were to get enacted in such societies, there would not be a single back that would be left untouched with lashes, that there would be thousands of people who would have to part with their hands on a daily basis and hundreds of convicts would be stoned to death every day.

For a matter of fact, their concerns are not unfounded. To leave aside all other aspects of Islamic law and execute only its criminal law in such a despicable society would indeed amount to the very injustice that they are fearful of. But what they do not realize is that they are at fault in regarding this despicable lifestyle, which they have become habituated to, as normal. No, it is not normal. Rather, it is the overpowering influence of Satan that has imposed this abnormal lifestyle upon them; the presence of this influence itself being a grave injustice! First and foremost, implement the complete Islamic social code and uproot this injustice. Only then would it dawn upon you that theft, fornication, adultery, slander and alcoholism are not the routine and common activities of human beings, and that the vast majority of mankind can never be expected to indulge in these. The society that Islam establishes is such that only a minute percentage of the population can ever get engrossed in these crimes, and the punishment for such convicts can be none other than stoning to death, lashes and chopping off their hands.

2. The second thing that needs to be considered here is the wisdom and balance found in Islamic law. A person can never appreciate the injunctions concerning Islam's penal code unless he is aware of these defining features....

   On the one hand, all the means and roads to crime are systematically cut off so as to ensure that a person does not find himself in a situation where he is compelled to

give vent to his natural desires by resorting to crime. On the other hand, such exemplary punishments have been laid down that not only serve to deter the convicted person from ever repeating his crime, but also instil a sense of fear in all those people who have similar criminal tendencies.

On the one hand, all attempts are made to save people from being punished. Accordingly, the testimonials required to establish conviction are very demanding in nature. Before executing the punishment some time is allotted for investigations, to see if the claims of the witnesses can be falsified. The judges are instructed to make all possible attempts to save people from getting punished. The Prophet ﷺ has instructed thus, "Rule out punishments to the best of your ability" and "It is better for the authorized person to mistakenly forgive a person than to mistakenly punish someone".

On the other hand, once the guilt has been established, it is absolutely impermissible to entertain any intercession in favour of the convict or to give consideration to his status or family background. The Qur'an says,

وَلَا تَأْخُذْكُمْ بِهِمَا رَأْفَةٌ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ

"If you indeed believe in Allah and the Last Day, do not be taken by pity for them in the deen of Allah."

[Surah anNoor ayat 2]

Hadith literature speaks of a lady by the name Fatimah from the respectable Bani Makhzoom clan who used to borrow people's ornaments and other objects but used to plead ignorance when those things were demanded back. The case was brought before the Prophet ﷺ, and the accused woman's guilt was established. The Quraish were apprehensive lest her hand would also be severed. But there was no one who could gather the courage to intervene in this matter with the Prophet.

Finally, they decided to ask Usamah bin Zayd (God be pleased with him and his father) to intervene on behalf of the convicted woman because the Prophet loved Usamah very much, his father Zayd being his foster son and emancipated slave. But the Prophet got enraged when Usamah approached him with the request. He reprimanded him saying that, "Do you intervene in the matter of God's injunctions?" At this, Usamah pleaded for forgiveness. The Prophet then assembled the people and told them, "The practice of those nations that have been destroyed before you was to let off the respectable ones among them if they happened to commit a crime, but punish those convicts who were of inferior status. I swear by Him in whose hands lies my life that even if my daughter Fatimah would have committed the theft, I would have chopped off her hand as well."

3. After understanding the aforementioned points, it is also important that man should not be unaware of the spirit of Islam, which is the driving force behind all its injunctions. The Islamic concept of punishment is very compassionate. Islam does not punish anyone out of rage or fury. The element of rancour is not present in any of its laws. Here, the element of purification is found instead. A man convicted of a crime is punished with the sole intention of purging him of the taint that had been put on his soul because of the sin that he had committed. He is purified of the sin in the world itself, so that he is saved from the punishment of the hereafter. The convict himself comes to realize that his real judge is God, from whom he cannot hide any of his deeds; and the real court is the one that he would be presented to on the Day of Judgment, whose punishment is extremely humiliating. If he were to hide his sin in this world, he would appear before God with its taint present on his soul. But if he surrenders here and presents himself for the punishment he has

earned, he would be purged of that sin and would then appear before God with no taint of that sin remaining on his soul.[1]

- There is a Hadith that says,
"If a person gets tainted with any of these sins and he is punished for the same in this world itself, then this would serve as atonement in his favour. But if by the will of God his sin remains hidden, then his case rests with God- it would be up to Him to forgive him or punish him."

These teachings crated a revolution of sorts in the minds of the people. We present here some examples of the same. These examples would introduce you to the justice, morals and amazing revolutionary ideas of Islam, and you would probably be bewildered knowing that such people actually did exist!

A thief was once brought before the Prophet ﷺ, who had stolen a shawl. The Prophet glanced at him and remarked that, 'I don't think that he must have stolen it'. At this, the accused stepped forward and admitted, 'No, O messenger of God, I have indeed stolen it.' The Prophet accepted his confession and said, 'Go and cut off his hand and bring him back to me.' Accordingly, after chopping off his hand, he was brought back in the presence of the Prophet. The Prophet told him, 'Now repent before God'. He said, 'I repent'. The Prophet informed him, 'Go, God has accepted your repentance.'

At another occasion, a person named Umar bin Samrah approached the Prophet ﷺ and confessed that, 'I have

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[1] It should be understood here that if a person surrenders and presents himself for punishment, this act of his is counted as his repentance and such a person would be absolved of all sin after having served his sentence. As for that criminal who does not surrender on his own but is arrested and brought to the court, it was the blessed practice of the Prophet ﷺ that he would encourage that person to repent before God after having punished him.

stolen the camel of a certain tribe. Kindly purify me of it.' The Prophet sent a person to that tribe to investigate the matter. It came to be known that they indeed missed a camel. At this, the Prophet ordered that his hand be cut off. When he was so punished, he exclaimed, 'To God is due all gratitude who has purified me.' He then addressed his severed hand thus, 'You wanted to drive me to hell; God has saved me from you.'

In the aforementioned case of the lady from Banu Makhzoom, when the Prophet sentenced her to the penalty of theft, her clan told the Prophet that they were ready to offer compensation money for the crime committed and requested him to grant her pardon. But the Prophet insisted, 'Cut off her hand'. Her clan offered a compensation of 500 Dinars in lieu of her hand. The Prophet still insisted, 'Cut off her hand'. When her hand was cut off, she approached the Prophet and submitted, 'O messenger of God, is there any way I can save myself from God's punishment?' The Prophet replied, 'Yes, you have now been purified of your sins just like you were born sinless.'

In another famous incident, Ma'az Aslami came to the masjid and told the Prophet ﷺ, 'O messenger of God. I have committed adultery. Kindly purify me.' At this, the Prophet turned his face away and said, 'Go and repent before God and ask for His forgiveness.' He came before the Prophet once again and repeated his request. But the Prophet turned his face away. He again came before the Prophet and reiterated his plea. After having confessed thus four times in a row, the Prophet asked him whether he was mentally unstable. He replied in the negative. The Prophet then asked him if he was under the influence of alcohol. He denied this as well. The Prophet further asked him if he was married. He replied, 'Yes, I am'. The Prophet told him that perhaps he must have only kissed or embraced her. He said, 'No'. The Prophet asked him whether he had slept with her. He replied in the affirmative. The Prophet then asked him if he had had intercourse with her. He again replied in the

affirmative. The Prophet kept asking him the same question again and again using different words for intercourse, and each time he kept replying in the affirmative. Finally, the Prophet asked him if he knew what adultery was. He replied, 'Yes. I have unlawfully performed an act with her that a husband lawfully performs with his wife.' The Prophet then asked him the motive of his confession. He replied that he wanted to get purified. At this, the Prophet ordered him to be stoned to death. A couple of days after this incident, the Prophet told his companions, 'Pray for Ma'az bin Malik Aslami. He has repented, and his repentance was such that if it were to be distributed among the community, the entire community would be pardoned.'

One more renowned case is that of a lady named Ghamdiyyah. She presented herself before the Prophet ﷺ and said, 'O messenger of God, I have committed adultery. Please purify me.' The Prophet asked her to go and repent before God and seek His forgiveness. She said, 'Do you want to verify the case as you have done with Ma'az? I submit that I have got impregnated by that act of adultery.' The Prophet asked her to leave and wait till she delivers the child. When she delivered the child, she returned to the Prophet and informed him that the child has been born and requested him to issue his orders. The Prophet instructed her to feed the child and wait for the child's weaning, after which the matter would be decided upon. After the child was weaned off, she again approached the Prophet with her child and informed him that she was done with the feeding as well. At this, the Prophet gave the child in a Muslim's guardianship and commanded that the lady be stoned to death. After this incident, Khalid bin Walid happened to utter something bad about this lady. When the Prophet heard what he had said, he remarked, 'Mind your words, Khalid! I swear by Him in whose hands lies my life, the repentance she has made is such that even if a dishonest tax collector were to make such repentance he would be

forgiven.' After this, Prophet himself led the funeral prayers of that lady.

During the Battle of Qadisiyyah (against Persia), Abu Mihjan Thaqafi was held guilty of drinking alcohol. When the battle was raging on, Abu Mihjan became restless in the prison cell and requested the wife of the illustrious Sa'ad bin Abi Waqqas (the commander of the Muslim army, May God be pleased with him) thus, 'Please let me participate in the battle. If I die therein there would be no need of punishing me, and if I remain alive I would return to this cell on my own.' The oath of a Muslim (prisoner or not) used to hold so much credence that the commander's wife saw no reason why she could not trust him. Accordingly, not only did she release him, but also equipped him with the commander's finest mare. On the battlefield, this person, who was sentenced to 80 lashes by Islamic law, showed so much valour in the service of Islam and the Islamic government that the commander himself was left awestruck. And after the battle was over, this servant of God returned to the cell and locked himself up, just as he had promised. The commander released him in lieu of his gallantry and submitted, 'I would never lash the back of a person who has shown such selfless spirit in the way of God.' At this, Abu Mihjan said, 'Even I promise never to consume alcohol henceforth. All this while I was hopeful that you would purify me by executing the punishment, but now you have dodged this expectation of mine.'

These incidents are self explanatory. The concept of punishment in Islam is amply conveyed in these narrations. They tell us how Islam counters crime along with instilling high moral values in the convict and how that person is reintroduced into Islamic society with all honour and dignity after he has served his sentence. Those who accuse this law of being savage are savage themselves. The high cultural and ethical standards that this law has been able to promote man to are unprecedented in human history.

1. The prevailing conditions and the condition of the accused are also brought into consideration while pronouncing sentences. Sentences are left suspended during wars. The hand of the thief is not cut during a famine. If it is proved that the thief was compelled to commit the theft, he is let off by the judge. Take for instance the case of Hatib bin Abi Balta'a and his slaves. It has been narrated that they had stolen the camel of a person from the Muzainah tribe (to satisfy their hunger... Translator). The owner of the camel submitted his complaint before Caliph Umar. After investigating into the case, he initially commanded that the hands of the slaves be cut off. Then he suddenly turned his attention to the condition of those slaves and remarked, 'You have made these poor souls toil for you but kept them hungry, to the point that it became permissible for them to eat forbidden food.' Thereupon, he released the slaves and ordered their master, Hatib to compensate the loss incurred by the owner of the camel.

There are many such examples that tell us that Islamic law is not aberrant. Instead, it differentiates between a person who was actually compelled to commit a crime and the person who committed a crime with nothing truly compelling him to do so. This is exactly why there is difference between the penalties for fornication and adultery. And this is also why the thief rendered helpless by famine is not treated in the same manner as a thief who is well-heeled.

Tarjumanul Qur'an

Muharram 1358 AH/ March 1939 CE

Slavery

(This is a serial discussion that was published in Tarjumanul Qur'an pertaining to the critique of a book authored by a renowned writer of our country.

This discussion is composed of the following parts:

The critique offered by Tarjumanul Qur'an

The reply offered by the author

The counter reply offered by Tarjumanul Qur'an

A write-up offered by a renowned writer in support of the author

The final reply by Tarjumanul Qur'an

Since the intention behind reproducing this discussion is not to open up the discussion anew, we have withheld the names of the writers)

(A)

The learned author has presented his study on the issue of slavery in the following words:

"It is against the precepts of nature for a human being to enslave another human being. However, slavery was already in vogue during the revelation of the Qur'an, and the Arabs too had slaves in their possession. On account of certain factors, the Qur'an let them hold possession of those slaves who were already in their servitude."

After this, he has mentioned in a footnote:

"The Qur'an has always used the past tense while referring to slaves (ma malakat aimanukum). It has never used the future tense in this regard. This means

> *that the slavery of only those slaves was retained who were already in their servitude."*

This statement and its footnote both need to be revised. There is no doubt that the Qur'an brings into consideration human weaknesses and hence adopts a gradual step-by-step procedure to reform the society. But we never come across a single example where this procedure was left mid-way and the final leg of this gradual process was not realized before the final completion of revelation. In light of this general rule, can we find a single injunction in the Qur'an that has explicitly outlawed every form of slavery? As for the claim that slavery was retained among the Arabs because the practice of slavery was in vogue among them and they were in possession of slaves is akin to levelling charges of incompetency and weakness against God. God is He who issued a blanket ban on alcohol without bringing into consideration the desires of His servants. He made all forms of sexual misconduct (fornication, adultery, rape etc.) impermissible without showing any regard for the fact that such sexual crimes were commonplace among Arabs and other nations around the world. What could possibly have then prevented Him from outlawing all forms of slavery as well?

What is actually true is that there were two forms of slavery prevalent in the world at that time:

- The free citizens of some countries were picked up and sold in the market as slaves.
- The prisoners of war were enslaved.

The first of these forms has been totally forbidden by the Prophet ﷺ. He has gone on record saying that he would himself stand as a petitioner on the Day of Judgment against the person who kidnaps a free soul and sells him/her off as a slave. [Bukhari]

The Islamic law regarding the second form states that prisoners of war should either be released as a token of mercy, or released against ransom, or exchanged for the

Muslim prisoners in the captivity of the enemy. However, if it is deemed against war strategy to let off the prisoners, and there is no way a ransom can be obtained, and the enemy is unwilling to exchange them for their own, then the Muslims are entitled to retain them as slaves. However, it has been ordained that such slaves should be treated with utmost compassion and kindness, their education and grooming should be looked into and they should be made good citizens of society. In addition to this, numerous modes of emancipating them from slavery have also been prescribed. In order to gain proper insight into the Islamic laws laid down in this regard, we need to have a look at the practice of the Prophet ﷺ, his commands and the practice of the blessed companions (God be pleased with them all) in addition to studying the relevant injunctions enshrined in the Qur'an. The author has slipped because he has tried to derive the rulings regarding slavery only from the Qur'an and has ignored these other sources.

The conclusion the author arrives at after reading the phrase, *ma malakat aimanukum* (those that your right hands possess) is not correct. Even after the revelation of the Qur'an had been completed, many prisoners of war were retained as slaves during the era of the companions. Slaves captured from battles and slave-girls who had arrived from conquered territories could be found in the houses of the Prophet's family members (*ahle bait*) as well. Does that mean that all these companions wilfully disobeyed the injunctions of the Qur'an? Or is it that they were all unaware of the Qur'anic commandments concerning slavery?

Moreover, if you consider it to be a rule that whatever has been mentioned in the Qur'an using the past tense should necessarily allude exclusively to the past and not to the present or future, then how is it that you have yourself interpreted the first ayat of Surah alQamar, *iqtarabati assa'atu wa inshaqqa alqamar* (Surah: alQamar:1) in your book as 'The moon would be rent asunder when the Last

Day arrives'? Equally surprising is the fact that you have interpreted the ayat, *kana arshuhu ala al'maa* [Surah Hud ayat 7] as 'His throne is over the waters'.

Further down, the author has cited the fourth ayat of Surah Muhammad, حَتّٰىٓ اِذَآ اَثْخَنْتُمُوْهُمْ فَشُدُّوا الْوَثَاقَ ۙ فَاِمَّا مَنًّاۢ بَعْدُ وَاِمَّا فِدَآءً *"...until you have crushed them, then bind your captives firmly; thereafter (you are entitled to) either bestow favour upon them or ransom them...."* and has understood it to mean that:

> *"There was only one way open for slavery- by retaining prisoners of war. But the Qur'an has closed this door for all times to come by commanding that the prisoners be freed."*

But the author has not pondered over the case wherein the disbelievers neither offer ransom in the form of money, nor exchange the prisoners they have held captive. Are the Muslims still obliged to bestow favour upon the prisoners and set them free? Is the Muslim camp required to release them even if there is a danger of the enemy gaining strength by the release of these prisoners and the Muslims fear that these prisoners would again attack them once they are liberated? There is no such explicit command given in the ayat. The word used in the ayat is *manna*, which means to bestow a favour. All through the Qur'an, bestowing favour upon someone has only been encouraged upon by calling it a virtuous act; never has it been made compulsory. Even in this ayat, all that has been said is that it is much more virtuous to set them free. But it does not mean that we should bestow favour upon them even if it goes against the strategic interests of Islam or that we should necessarily bestow favour upon them.

Tarjumanul Qur'an
[Rabiul Awwal 1353 AH]

(B)

The reply offered by the author:

Every child of Adam is the king of this world. The Qur'an says about Adam, إِنِّيْ جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيْفَةً ؕ *"Verily I will make upon the earth a khalifa"* [Surah alBaqarah ayat 30]. It has been said about the children of Adam that, وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ جَعَلَكُمْ خَلٰٓئِفَ الْأَرْضِ *"And it is He who has made you khalaifa upon the earth"* [Surah alAn'am ayat 165]. It has further been said, وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِيْٓ اٰدَمَ *"And We have certainly honoured the children of Adam"* [Surah Bani Israil ayat 70]. These ayaat tell us that human beings have been created as kings, (or vicegerents of truth as per your interpretation). Does it then not go against nature to enslave them? How is it possible that the Qur'an would allow an unnatural act to continue?

You agree that:

"There were two forms of slavery prevalent in the world at that time:

- The free citizens of some countries were picked up and sold in the market as slaves.
- The prisoners of war were enslaved.

The first of these forms has been totally forbidden by the Prophet ﷺ. He has gone on record saying that he would himself stand as a petitioner on the Day of Judgment against the person who kidnaps a free soul and sells him/her off as a slave. [Bukhari]

The Islamic law regarding the second form states that prisoners of war should either be released as a token of mercy, or released against ransom, or exchanged for the Muslim prisoners in the captivity of the enemy. However, if it is deemed against war strategy to let off the prisoners, and there is no way a ransom can be obtained, and the enemy is unwilling to exchange them for their own, then the Muslims are entitled to retain them as slaves."

At least this much is established that kidnapping someone and forcing him into slavery is so abominable an act that the Prophet ﷺ would himself petition against it on the Day of Judgment. The point of contention is regarding the prisoners of war, about whom the Qur'an explicitly says, فَإِمَّا مَنًّا بَعْدُ وَإِمَّا فِدَاءً *'then either set them free by bestowing favour upon them or by taking ransom in exchange'* [Surah Muhammad ayat 4]. This ransom can either be in the form of money or valuables or in the form of a prisoner exchange. In any case, the command that remains is that they be liberated. They can, no doubt, be kept captive as long as it is feared that their release would adversely affect Islamic interests. But they cannot be enslaved. The Qur'an has not allowed the government to sell them off as slaves or distribute them among the soldiers. Rather, they would remain as state prisoners and would be treated with honour and dignity. You, on the contrary, insist that the Muslims have been granted the right to distribute the prisoners of war among themselves and treat them as their slaves or sell them off as cattle; and until and unless their masters free them, they should continue to remain in servitude till the Last Day, generation after generation, being bereft of all human rights, wealth and property. They would then never be granted any right or privilege even if they were to become Muslims.

Is this what the Qur'an has taught us? Can you prove it by quoting a passage or even a word from the Qur'an? Then on what basis are you criticizing me? I have, after all, presented the teachings of the Qur'an.

Your argument is that,

> *"Many prisoners of war were retained as slaves during the era of the companions. Slaves captured from battles and slave-girls who had arrived from conquered territories could be found in the houses of the Prophet's family members (ahle bait) as well."*

In your opinion, each and every act of the companions and that of the Prophet's family members (God be pleased with them all) is in accordance with the Qur'an. In my opinion, however, only those acts of theirs can be regarded as being in line with *deen* that can be traced back to the Qur'an. If you want to discuss this topic in the premises of history, then I can convincingly explain the circumstances under which the companions and the family members of the Prophet ﷺ (God be pleased with them all) were forced to enslave people. But this act of theirs that was done in a specific situation cannot be termed as an enactment of Qur'anic injunctions without any proof whatsoever. The Qur'an is present in every Muslim household. Read it again and again and let me know if you find any ayat therein that concurs with this unnatural act of enslaving human beings.

I had written that since slavery was in vogue among the Arabs and they were in possession of slaves, the Qur'an allowed only those slaves to remain in servitude and opened up ways to emancipate them as well. It then closed all avenues of enslaving people in the future.

You have responded to this by saying that:

"As for the claim that slavery was retained among the Arabs because the practice of slavery was in vogue among them and they were in possession of slaves is akin to levelling charges of incompetency and weakness against God. God is He who issued a blanket ban on alcohol without bringing into consideration the desires of His servants. He made all forms of sexual misconduct (fornication, adultery, rape etc.) impermissible without showing any regard for the fact that such sexual crimes were commonplace among Arabs and other nations around the world. What could possibly have then prevented Him from outlawing all forms of slavery as well?"

But you have not noted that alcoholism, sexual crimes and other such vices are moral crimes related to the

individual which had to be stopped immediately. Slavery, on the contrary, had become a part of Arab economics. There were hundreds of tribes and clans that made a living out of it. Releasing all the slaves at once would have made their economy collapse, which could have led to an uprising. Hence, it was necessary to abolish slavery in a gradual manner, and this is exactly what God has done in His infinite wisdom and sagacity.

Tarjumanul Qur'an
Jamadi alAwwal 1353 AH

(C)

The counter reply by Tarjumanul Qur'an:

The Qur'an has left it to the discretion of Muslims whether to release the prisoners of war as an act of grace or release them in exchange of some ransom (in cash, kind or prisoner exchange). But it has not made it obligatory upon them to act upon the first option if the second option seems unviable. This is because God is aware of man's nature. He knows that if the matter involves only a handful of prisoners, the Muslims would willingly bestow a favour upon them by releasing them, which they have often done during the era of the Prophet ﷺ and his companions. But what if the matter involves hundreds and thousands of prisoners, especially when as many Muslims have been taken captive by the enemy as well and rendered slaves? In such a scenario, it would be extremely difficult for Muslims to release the enemy's men as a goodwill gesture. The only way to release them in this case would be to either ransom them for some valuables or demand the release of Muslims held captive by the enemy. Now if the prisoners of war are unable to pay the ransom amount and their government is also unwilling to opt for an exchange of prisoners, and the Muslim captives continue to rot as slaves in their camps (as was indeed the case for more than a thousand years), then

there is no reason why the Muslims should not be similarly entitled to enslave the enemy captives.

You are trying to understand this issue in the present context. Today, the practice of enslaving prisoners of war has been discontinued by non-Muslim nations and the exchange of prisoners is more common now. The conditions that compelled Muslims to enslave prisoners of war no longer exist in our times. Hence, you are reluctant to admit the allowance for slavery that is present in Islamic law. But if you ponder over those conditions that had been prevailing in this world as recently as a century and a half back, you would realize that the permission for slavery that exists in Islamic law is not uncalled for. It is actually yet another example of the remarkable wisdom of the Qur'an that it has issued such a balanced command that not only took into consideration the conditions prevailing at the time of its revelation, but also contained certain reformatory guidelines that would automatically be implemented once the situation becomes more conducive for the same.

You insist that the Qur'an has made slavery unlawful and impermissible. At the same time, you also accept that the blessed companions and the family members of the Prophet ﷺ (God be pleased with them all) had been keeping the prisoners of war as their slaves. This leads you to inadvertently conclude that their practice went against the Qur'an and that it was unlawful for them to do so. You might as well enter into the premises of history and come up with as convincing an explanation as you possibly can, but you cannot ignore the logical outcome of your stance. For if you take this to be true, then you would not only have to admit that the practice of the rightly guided caliphs, the companions of the Prophet ﷺ and his family members (God be pleased with them all) was unlawful and contravened the commands of the Qur'an, but you would also have to admit that the Qur'an had (God forbid!) come up with such an imprudent law that failed to take into

account the prevailing conditions of the day, which could not be implemented for the next twelve hundred years and which could not be followed even by those people who had been groomed and trained under the direct care of the Prophet ﷺ and who had gone to all possible lengths to mould themselves in the cast of Islamic teachings!

This is not just a logical deduction. If you think over it, you would realize that if what you understand from the 4th ayat of Surah Muhammad is indeed taken to be the Islamic law in this regard, then in certain situations it would prove to be extremely hazardous and exceptionally impossible to implement. What such a law would necessarily entail is that the Muslims would be obliged to release their captive prisoners even if they refuse to part with the ransom amount and even if the enemy were to turn down the request for a prisoner exchange. Had this indeed been the law that Muslims were required to abide by, which army of disbelievers would have been foolish enough to pay any ransom amount or release any Muslim held captive by them? This would have led to millions of Muslims languishing permanently in enemy prisons or being treated as slaves all their lives, while the enemy captives would have been released after each and every battle. Can such a law ever be called just? Is it possible for any human being to ever abide by it?

Tarjumanul Qur'an
Vol 5, Issue 4

(D)

A write-up offered by a renowned writer in support of the author:

The discussion so far: The prisoners of war should be released either by bestowing a favour upon them or in exchange of some ransom (in the form of some valuables or in exchange of our own prisoners). But what should be our course of action if releasing them as a favour goes against strategic interests and the enemy refuses to cough up any

ransom? The author has suggested that such prisoners should be treated as state prisoners. You, on the other hand, insist that in such a case they should rather be enslaved. The author had asked you to furnish proof from the Qur'an in support of your proposition. But you have not paid any attention to his request and have refrained from citing any ayat from the Qur'an that allows us to enslave the prisoners of war. Instead, you have presented two arguments:

The first of these is that 'Why should the Muslims not enslave the enemy captives when the same is being done with the Muslims taken captive by the enemy camp?' While this might seem very alluring, what can possibly be done about the fact that the Qur'an seeks to raise the moral standards of Muslims from nurturing the petty attitude that if the enemy subjects you to an inhuman treatment then you should also treat them in an uncivilized manner? The Muslims have not even been allowed to abuse the clay idols worshipped by the pagans. Moreover, you have yourself stated that those slaves should be treated with utmost compassion and kindness. But does this not go against your own argument? How is it that the enemy would treat those Muslims under their captivity with utter disdain, while you would strive to incorporate them as good citizens of society? Does your principle also allow Muslims to abuse lady prisoners if it is known that the enemy is abusing the Muslim ladies imprisoned by them? Islam has its own distinct principles and it would act upon them regardless of what the world is doing!

Your second argument related to the practice of the blessed companions and the family members of the Prophet ﷺ. This argument would suffice in my case. But what if someone were to remind you that you have already promised not to go beyond the Qur'an and that you should present your proof from the Qur'an itself? Would he not stand justified if he says so?

You have also argued that releasing the Muslims as a goodwill gesture could prove hazardous for Muslims, for in that case there would not be any nation foolish enough to pay up the ransom amount. I have, however, noticed that the benefits of letting off the prisoners as a favour far surpassed the benefits that can be obtained from the money collected as ransom. This was helpful in reforming people's perceptions regarding Islam. The Prophet ﷺ had released thousands of prisoners without demanding any ransom in return, the benefits of which are far too evident to mention.

But the principal question is about enslaving people and selling them off. Please let us know the Qur'anic injunction in this regard. And how should the Muslims treat prisoners of war today if the enemy refuses to pay any ransom and the Muslims are unwilling to let off these captives as a goodwill gesture? The ayat, 'those that your right hands possess' and the treatment of prisoners of war are among the most delicate issues today. Kindly offer a solution to the same.

Tarjumanul Qur'an
Zil Hijj 1353 AH

(E)

The final reply by Tarjumanul Qur'an:

The author's argument that the prisoners of war should not be enslaved is hinged upon the 4th ayat of Surah Muhammad that the author translates as:

حَتّٰٓى اِذَآ اَثْخَنْتُمُوْهُمْ فَشُدُّوا الْوَثَاقَ ۙ فَاِمَّا مَنًّۢا بَعْدُ وَاِمَّا فِدَآءً

'...until you have crushed them, then secure their bonds; thereafter set them free either as an act of favour or against ransom....'[1]

[1] Please note that this is the author's own translation. The words 'set them free' have been added by him. The original ayat has no word that can be translated thus.

From this ayat, he concludes that the Qur'an has prescribed only two options with relation to the prisoners of war- either set them free without taking any compensation, or against a ransom. But set them free you must. And enslaving them is not at all permissible.

We need to study three aspects of this ayat:

- ➢ What is apparent from the words of the ayat?
- ➢ What is the correct interpretation of this ayat in the light of other ayaat of the Qur'an?
- ➢ What did the Prophet ﷺ understand from this ayat and how did he act upon it?

The meaning of the ayat

In this ayat, the words *manna* and *fida'a* are both accompanied with the word *imma*. This word has two meanings. The sentence would either mean: 'You are authorized to bestow a favour or take a ransom', or it would mean: 'It is lawful for you whether you bestow a favour or take a ransom'. But there is no way it could mean: 'You are obligated to act upon either of these two options'. The explicit command was only limited to: فَإِذَا لَقِيتُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَضَرْبَ الرِّقَابِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَثْخَنتُمُوهُمْ فَشُدُّوا الْوَثَاقَ *'So when you meet those who disbelieve (in battle), strike (their) necks, until you have crushed them to the point that they are no longer capable of fighting you; then bind the captives'*. After issuing this command, the Muslims are authorized/it is made lawful for them to either bestow a favour upon the captives or to accept a ransom.

The word, *manna* is also worth noting. *Manna* only means favour. 'Set them free as an act of favour' is the author's own addition. Although one form of bestowing a favour is indeed to release the captives, it could also mean that the captives should be treated favourably. Why should only the first meaning be adopted and the second discarded? If there is any word or indication in the Qur'an to suggest that

the word favour should be exclusively taken to mean release of the captives then I request you to share the same with us.

Other ayaat of the Qur'an

Now let us search for an ayat in the Qur'an that explicitly makes it unlawful to enslave the prisoners of war and says that there is no third option left open to us other than releasing the prisoners of war as an act of grace or releasing them in lieu of some ransom. There certainly exists no such ayat. In sharp contrast, you would find plenty of such ayaat that deal with injunctions related to slaves and bondswomen that have been revealed even after this particular ayat. If I were to cite those ayaat that had been revealed before the revelation of the ayat under consideration, then you could have argued that since the release orders of those prisoners had not been issued up until that time, it was permissible to keep slaves and bondswomen and hence the injunctions regarding them are very much understandable. But what justification do you have regarding those ayaat that have been revealed after this particular ayat? If what you understand from this ayat would indeed have been true, then it necessarily entails that all slaves and bondswomen ought to have been released with immediate effect. But the later ayaat tell us that this was certainly not the case. Neither were they released, nor was the revelation of such injunctions discontinued.

This ayat belongs to Surah Muhammad, part of which was revealed in Makkah and another part in the initial phase of the Prophet's ﷺ stay in Madinah. Ibn Abbas (God be pleased with him) explains in his exegesis that the opening words of the ayat, فَإِذَا لَقِيتُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا *'So when you meet those who disbelieve'* mean 'When you happen to face the disbelievers in the Battle of Badr'. This suggests that this ayat was revealed before the Battle of Badr. This is also evident from the 67th ayat of Surah alAnfal which says, مَا كَانَ لِنَبِيٍّ أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُ أَسْرَىٰ حَتَّىٰ يُثْخِنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ *'It behoves not a prophet to*

take captives until he sufficiently suppresses the enemies in the land'. This ayat was revealed in relation to the prisoners taken during the Battle of Badr. The reprimand contained in this ayat was because the command issued in the 4th ayat of Surah Muhammad to 'crush them' before 'securing their bonds' was not properly followed. This conclusively proves that the 4th ayat of Surah Muhammad was revealed before the Battle of Badr which took place in the year 2 AH.

Now consider the 50th ayat of Surah alAhzab that allows the Prophet ﷺ to keep the bondswomen that are taken captive in a battle:

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ اِنَّآ اَحْلَلْنَا لَكَ اَزْوَاجَكَ الّٰتِيْٓ اٰتَيْتَ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ يَمِيْنُكَ
مِمَّآ اَفَآءَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْكَ

"O Prophet, We have made lawful for you your wives whose bridal dues you have paid, and those whom your right hand possesses out of the captives of war whom Allah has given to you...."

In this ayat, 'whom your right hands possess' refers to bondswomen, who have been described as 'out of the captives of war whom Allah has given to you'. It is known to one and all that God had not granted the Prophet ﷺ any war booty before the Battle of Badr. This means that the bondswomen the Qur'an is making lawful in this ayat are the ones who were taken captive in battle by the Muslims following the Battle of Badr.

The Qur'an further says,

لَا يَحِلُّ لَكَ النِّسَآءُ مِنْۢ بَعْدُ وَلَآ اَنْ تَبَدَّلَ بِهِنَّ مِنْ اَزْوَاجٍ وَّلَوْ اَعْجَبَكَ
حُسْنُهُنَّ اِلَّا مَا مَلَكَتْ يَمِيْنُكَ

"Not lawful to you, (O Muhammad), are (any additional) women after (this), nor (is it lawful) for you to exchange them for (other) wives, even if their beauty were to please you, except what your right hand possesses." [Surah alAhzab ayat 52]

When this ayat was revealed, the number of wives in the Prophet's matrimony had reached eleven. We know that the Prophet's last marriage was solemnized with Lady Maimunah (God be pleased with our mother) and this was in the year 7 AH. This leads us to believe that this ayat must have been revealed around 8 AH. In other words, keeping bondswomen was permissible in 8 AH.

The Battle of Autas took place towards the end of 8 AH. Many women were taken captive. There was confusion among the Muslims with regards the married women amongst them. The following ayat was revealed in this regard:

وَّالْمُحْصَنٰتُ مِنَ النِّسَآءِ اِلَّا مَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ

"And (also prohibited to you are all) married women except those your right hands possess." *[anNisa' : 24]*

The 3rd ayat of Surah anNisa' says,

وَاِنْ خِفْتُمْ اَلَّا تُقْسِطُوْا فِي الْيَتٰمٰى فَانْكِحُوْا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ النِّسَآءِ مَثْنٰى
وَثُلٰثَ وَرُبٰعَ فَاِنْ خِفْتُمْ اَلَّا تَعْدِلُوْا فَوَاحِدَةً اَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ

"And if you fear that you will not deal justly with the orphan girls, then marry those that please you of (other) women, two or three or four. But if you fear that you will not be just, then (marry only) one or those your right hand possesses."

This command was issued after the Battle of Uhud.

All these injunctions prove that the learned author has misunderstood the 4th ayat of Surah Muhammad. Had what the author assumes indeed been true, it would have been absolutely unlawful to keep bondswomen after the revelation of this ayat. The Qur'an, instead, permits this practice and even issues injunctions in this regard.

The Past Tense

The author has pointed out that the Qur'an always uses the past tense (*ma malakat aimanukum*) to refer to slaves. This would mean that only *'those slaves who were already*

in their possession' were retained as slaves. Does this mean that those Qur'anic injunctions that have been issued using the past tense are not valid for the future?

The ayat that prohibits a person from marrying his step-daughter [23rd ayat of Surah anNisa'] has these words:

وَرَبَآئِبُكُمُ الّٰتِيْ فِيْ حُجُوْرِكُمْ مِّنْ نِّسَآئِكُمُ الّٰتِيْ دَخَلْتُمْ بِهِنَّ

> *"...and (prohibited to you are) your step-daughters under your guardianship (born) of your wives unto whom you have gone in..."*

The Arabic word *dakhaltum*, which has been translated here as 'you have gone in', belongs to the past tense. Now if we apply the author's logic here, it would mean that the daughters of only those women are prohibited who were married to the Muslims before the revelation of this ayat, and that this rule is no longer applicable.

Even in the 41st ayat of Surah alAnfal, وَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّمَا غَنِمْتُمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ فَاَنَّ لِلّٰهِ خُمُسَهٗ *"And know that anything you obtain of war booty - then indeed, for Allah is one fifth of it and for the Messenger and for [his] near relatives and the orphans, the needy, and the (stranded) traveller...."*, the command regarding one-fifth of the booty would then be applicable only for the past, and that there should have been no fifth share allocated after this ayat was revealed.

Take the 9th ayat of Surah alJuma'a: يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِذَا نُوْدِيَ لِلصَّلٰوةِ مِنْ يَّوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ *"O you who have believed, when (the adhan) is called for the prayer on the day of Jumu'ah (Friday), then proceed to the remembrance of Allah and leave trade."* Does the past tense used here mean that the Friday prayers were obligatory only upon those who were already Muslims when this ayat was revealed? Do the people who have accepted Islam after this revelation stand absolved of offering Friday prayers?

It seems that the learned author has come up with a point that the earlier scholars have remained completely

oblivious of. Had this point been known earlier, Muslims would long have been liberated of all those injunctions that God had been callous enough (God forbid!) to issue in the past tense instead of the future! This rule would even rescue the disbelievers and deniers of God's signs from the fire of hell, because Surah alBaqarah's 39th ayat, *wallazina kafaru wa kazzabu bi ayaatina ulaika ashab an'naar* (And those who have disbelieved and denied Our signs- those will be companions of the fire) has both *kafaru* and *kazzabu* in the past tense. This would mean that all those people who have disbelieved or denied God's signs after the revelation of his ayat do not come under the ambit of this warning.

Please understand that adopting such interpretations of the Qur'an are actually ways of corrupting its message. A Muslim should tremble at the thought of reading such things in the Qur'an.

The blessed Practice of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ

Next, we should see what the Prophet ﷺ understood by the words, *fa imma manna ba'adu wa imma fidaa'a* and *ma malakat aimanukum* and how did he act upon them.

In the case of Bani Quraizah, Sa'ad bin Ma'az (God be pleased with him) ruled that their men be killed, while their women and children be made bondswomen and slaves. The Prophet ﷺ implemented this decision of his.

Many women were taken as captives following the Battle of Khaibar. They were distributed amongst the Muslims. The mother of the believers and wife of the Prophet, Lady Safiyah (God be pleased with her) was also among these women.

Six thousand women and children were taken captive following the Battle of Hunain. A delegation from the Hawazin tribe approached the Prophet ﷺ to seek their release. The Prophet said that, "I shall release those who are in my own custody and in the custody of Bani Abdul

Mutallib as an act of grace. However, I have no right to command others to follow suit. I can only request them to do so". The Ansar and the Muhajireen complied with the request of the Prophet and released those slaves and bondswomen who had fallen in their share. The representatives of Banu Tameem, Banu Fazarah and Banu Saleem, however, refused to part with their captives. As a final attempt, the Prophet promised them that they would be given six slaves and bondswomen from those captured in successive battles for each slave and bondswoman that they agree to release today. It was only then that they agreed to release the captives taken from Banu Hawazin.

The case of the captives taken following the Battle of Autas has already been discussed above, regarding which the 24th ayat of Surah anNisa', وَّالْمُحْصَنٰتُ مِنَ النِّسَآءِ اِلَّا مَامَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ *"And (also prohibited to you are all) married women except those your right hands possess"* was revealed.

While it is true that the Prophet ﷺ has indeed released prisoners of war as an act of grace on certain occasions, exchanged prisoners on certain others and ransomed them for some valuables on certain other occasions as well, it cannot be denied that many people have been enslaved and distributed among the Muslims under his supervision. Can there be anyone who can be expected to understand and act upon the injunctions of the Qur'an better than the Prophet ﷺ? If there is any person who thinks he is better placed than the Prophet to do so, let him revel in his fantasy; we leave his matter to God. But this is certainly not the case with Muslims. A Muslim believes in only that law which has been passed by the Prophet ﷺ by his acts and deeds.

Tarjumanul Qur'an
Zil Hijj 1353 AH, May 1934 CE

A few Question on Slaves and Bondswomen

(One of the most misunderstood issues related to Islam today is the issue of slavery. A number of queries concerning this contentious issue have been sent to us and we have replied to them in quite some detail in many an issue of Tarjumanul Qur'an. We have compiled these questions and answers here.)

(1)

Question:

"Most religious scholars cite the 6th ayat of Surah alMumineen (except from their wives and those whom their right hands possess) to permit extra-marital relations with slave girls. This leads to the following questions. Kindly reply to them:

2. Having extra-marital relations with slave girls is nothing but an expression of one's lust. The Qur'an forbids this when it says, *"(seek them) desiring chastity, not lust"* [Surah anNisa' ayat 24]
3. Since ownership grants a person the right to have sexual relations with his slave girl, then the unmarried mistress of a slave should also have the right to have sexual relations with her slave. She can use contraceptives to avoid a pregnancy.
4. If non-Muslim enemy nations were to treat their Muslim lady prisoners in the same manner, then what moral right do the Muslims have to protest against the same?

5. We have an excellent example in the chaste and selfless life of the Prophet ﷺ, especially his family life while he was in his prime. How far is it true that he had relations with slave girls in his last years when he already had many ladies in his matrimony?
6. If ownership grants a person the right to have sexual relations with his slave girl, then in the case of *"So marry them with the permission of their people"* [Surah anNisa' ayat 25], would her master and her husband both be entitled to have sexual relations with her?

Reply:

It should be clearly understood at the outset itself that there are a number of ayaat in the Qur'an that explicitly allow an owner to have sexual relations with his slave girls. Many people are quick to oppose this practice under the false impression that it is the *maulvis* (clerics) who have come up with this permission. Some Hadith deniers even cross their limits by referring to this practice as one of the many 'corruptions of Hadith'. These people better be aware that this issue owes not its origin to some cleric's jurisprudence or some Hadith collector's narration, but to the Book of God itself. Kindly consider the following ayaat to get the clear picture....

فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا فَوَاحِدَةً أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ

"But if you fear that you will not be just, then (marry only) one or those your right hand possesses."

[Surah anNisa' ayat 3]

وَالْمُحْصَنَاتُ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ إِلَّا مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ

"And (also prohibited to you are all) married women except those your right hands possess."

[Surah anNisa' ayat 24]

وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ لِفُرُوْجِهِمْ حٰفِظُوْنَ۝ اِلَّا عَلٰٓى اَزْوَاجِهِمْ اَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُهُمْ فَاِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ مَلُوْمِيْنَ۝

"And they who guard their private parts, except from their wives or those their right hands possess, for indeed, they will (then) not be blamed"

[Surah alMu'minoon ayaat 5, 6]

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ اِنَّآ اَحْلَلْنَا لَكَ اَزْوَاجَكَ الّٰتِيْٓ اٰتَيْتَ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ يَمِيْنُكَ مِمَّآ اَفَآءَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْكَ

"O Prophet, We have made lawful for you your wives whose bridal dues (dowers) you have paid, and those whom your right hand possesses out of the captives of war whom Allah has given to you...."

[Surah alAhzab ayat 50]

لَا يَحِلُّ لَكَ النِّسَآءُ مِنْۢ بَعْدُ وَلَآ اَنْ تَبَدَّلَ بِهِنَّ مِنْ اَزْوَاجٍ وَّلَوْ اَعْجَبَكَ حُسْنُهُنَّ اِلَّا مَا مَلَكَتْ يَمِيْنُكَ

"Not lawful to you, (O Muhammad), are (any additional) women after (this), nor (is it lawful) for you to exchange them for (other) wives, even if their beauty were to please you, except what your right hand possesses." *[Surah alAhzab ayat 52]*

These ayaat conclusively prove that it is permissible to have sexual relations with those that 'your right hands possess', which alludes to slave girls. Now it should be seen under what circumstances this permission was granted, what is the purpose behind it and what are the possible ways in which it can be implemented as directed by Islam.

The reason why people find it difficult to understand the Islamic injunctions concerning slaves and bondswomen taken captive in battles is that the circumstances in which these laws were laid down cease to exist today. The practice of enslaving prisoners of war and selling them off

has been in vogue right from ancient times, and was common till as late as the 18th Century CE. It was very rare in those days for belligerent nations to call for a truce and place a demand for their prisoners of war or pay a ransom to facilitate their release. What used to happen those days was that the ones taken captive in a battle used to be retained by the empire whose army has arrested them. This led to mass exodus of entire populations from one country to another. It was beyond the capacity of any nation to imprison so many people and burden itself with their basic needs of food and clothing. Hence, the government used to retain some prisoners for its personal service and distribute the rest among its soldiers as slaves and bondswomen.

This was the situation that Islam was facing, and it was under these very circumstances that it appealed to the world to release the prisoners of war in lieu of some ransom, or have them exchanged for their own people who have been held captive by the enemy camp, or release them as an act of grace. But this reform could not be brought about by the one-sided endeavour of the Muslims alone; it was also necessary for the non-Muslim belligerent nations to agree to these terms. But neither were they forthcoming in adopting these reforms then, nor did they do so for the next twelve hundred years. Hence, as a last resort, Islam allowed its followers to enslave the prisoners of war that were present in their custody just as the non-Muslim nations were enslaving the Muslims they took captive.

However, this allowance could have led to the formation of a depressed class in the Muslim society, as was the case with all such nations that had slave populations in their midst. Apart from the concern that this would have violated the human rights of the prisoners of war, it also posed the danger of giving rise to several such social and moral disturbances that have always been a by-product of accommodating a depressed class in one's society. Hence, while Islam did permit the enslavement of prisoners of war, it also framed such laws that ensured the

best possible treatment to these slaves and created ways and means for them to gradually get assimilated in mainstream Islamic society.

This is precisely the reason why it was made permissible to have sexual relations with bondswomen. Let us go back in history for a moment... a couple of centuries back. Imagine that Muslims are engaged in battle with a disbelieving nation. Following the battle, thousands of women fall into the custody of Muslims, many of whom are quite young and beautiful. The enemy refuses to pay any ransom for these ladies, and it is also unwilling to exchange them for the Muslim ladies that have gone into its captivity. The Muslims, on their part, decide not to release these ladies as an act of grace, fearing that if they do so they would be left with no hope of ever getting back their own ladies from the enemy camp. Having exhausted all options, they retain them in their custody. Tell me, what should be done with all these women who are now within the Islamic frontiers? To imprison them for life would be a grave injustice. To allow them to freely roam the streets would open up the doors to licentious activities. There is a danger of moral corruption spreading wherever they are kept. Not only would the society get spoiled, but the character of those ladies would also be forever blemished. In order to solve this predicament, Islam distributes these ladies among the Muslim population and strictly warns the Muslims against engaging them in prostitution and earning money from this despicable act. It has, instead, instructed them to either maintain sexual relations with these ladies or marry them off to someone so that they might not indulge in promiscuity. Various clauses of this law can be found in the Qur'an at various places.[1]

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[1] It should also be kept in mind that a lady prisoner of war can enter into the custody of a person only when the government officially entrusts her to him. Thereupon, only that particular person is entitled to have sexual relations with her. Having sex with a lady before she has been officially allotted to him by the government would be

وَلَا تُكْرِهُوْا فَتَيٰتِكُمْ عَلَى الْبِغَآءِ اِنْ اَرَدْنَ تَحَصُّنًا لِّتَبْتَغُوْا عَرَضَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا

"And do not compel your slave girls to prostitution, if they desire chastity, to seek [thereby] the temporary interests of worldly life."[1] *[Surah anNoor ayat 33]*

This is the first clause of this law. It has done away with an evil manner of benefitting from one's bondswoman.

But this was for those ladies who wished to guard their chastity. As for those slave girls who are themselves inclined towards lewdness, the following command has been revealed in their regard:

فَاِنْ اَتَيْنَ بِفَاحِشَةٍ فَعَلَيْهِنَّ نِصْفُ مَا عَلَى الْمُحْصَنٰتِ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ

"If they should commit adultery, then for them is half the punishment for free (unmarried) women."

[Surah anNisa' ayat 25]

This prevented the ladies from getting engaged in promiscuity- whether forced or wilful. But even she has desires, and it is necessary to fulfil her natural urges. If this is not done, not only would it be an injustice, but it would also open up secret avenues of moral degradation. Hence, in order to fulfil their carnal desires in a legitimate way, Islam has prescribed the following two ways:

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counted as an act of fornication/adultery. Likewise, it would also be unlawful for any person, other than the one she has been allotted to, to have sex with her. Such an act of fornication/adultery would be met with the same punishment that has been enshrined in Islamic law.

[1] There were many people in pre-Islamic Arabia who had opened up brothels and forced their slave girls into prostitution. They used to make a living out of this and if the slave girl would get pregnant, they would raise those illegitimate children to increase their retinue of slaves and slave-girls. When the Prophet ﷺ migrated to Madinah, there existed a brothel that was run by the leader of the hypocrites, Abdullah bin Ubai in which he had kept six slave girls as prostitutes. This practice has been prohibited in this ayat.

a) Her master may marry her off:

وَاَنْكِحُوا الْاَيَامٰى مِنْكُمْ وَالصّٰلِحِيْنَ مِنْ عِبَادِكُمْ وَاِمَآئِكُمْ

"And marry the unmarried among you and the righteous among your male slaves and female slaves."
[Surah anNoor ayat 32]

Similarly, those Muslims who are so poor that they cannot afford to pay the dower of ladies belonging to respectable families have also been encouraged to marry the slave girls by paying a minimal amount of dower:

وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَسْتَطِعْ مِنْكُمْ طَوْلًا اَنْ يَّنْكِحَ الْمُحْصَنٰتِ الْمُؤْمِنٰتِ فَمِنْ مَّا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ مِّنْ فَتَيٰتِكُمُ الْمُؤْمِنٰتِ

"And whoever among you cannot find the means to marry free, believing women, then (he may marry) from those whom your right hands possess of believing slave girls." *[Surah anNisa'a ayat 25]*

When a person marries off her slave girl to another person, he is no longer entitled to have sexual relations with her. This is because he has himself transferred this right to another person in exchange of the dower amount. Thus, such slave girls would also now be considered respectable because the Qur'an has allowed only her husband to have sexual relations with her. This has been elucidated in the remaining part of the aforementioned ayat:

فَانْكِحُوْهُنَّ بِاِذْنِ اَهْلِهِنَّ وَاٰتُوْهُنَّ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ مُحْصَنٰتٍ غَيْرَ مُسٰفِحٰتٍ وَّلَا مُتَّخِذٰتِ اَخْدَانٍ فَاِذَآ اُحْصِنَّ فَاِنْ اَتَيْنَ بِفَاحِشَةٍ فَعَلَيْهِنَّ نِصْفُ مَا عَلَى الْمُحْصَنٰتِ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ

"So marry them with the permission of their people and give them their due compensation according to what is acceptable. They should be chaste, neither of those who commit unlawful intercourse randomly nor those who take secret lovers. But once they are sheltered in marriage, if they should commit adultery,

then for them is half the punishment for free (unmarried) women." *[Surah anNisa' ayat 25]*

b) Her master may maintain sexual relations with her:

This can be done in three ways:

i. The master may treat the enslavement as marriage and have sexual relations with her.

ii. The master may liberate her and then marry her, her liberty itself being her dower.

iii. The master may liberate her and then marry her by offering her a fresh dower.

The Prophet ﷺ has preferred the second and the third options. We have a number of aHadith that encourage the believers to act upon the same:

"A person who has a slave girl whom he educates well, teaches her good moral values, then frees her and then marries her would get a double reward."

[Bukhari, Kitaab alNikah]

Another Hadith has these words: "frees her and marries her by paying her dower".

Abu Dawood has recorded a Hadith that says, *"When a person frees his bondswoman and marries her by paying her a fresh dower, he would get a double reward."*

The Prophet ﷺ has himself married Lady Safiyah and Lady Juwairiyah (May God be pleased with them) in this manner. He first liberated them and then married them. It is not certain whether he paid them a fresh dower or their liberty was itself declared to be their dower. It is probable that he might have followed both ways to demonstrate their respective permissibility- by paying a fresh dower to one of them and declaring the liberty of the other to be her dower.[1]

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[1] The practice of the Prophet ﷺ to marry slave girls towards the fag end of his life is testimony to the fact that his actual intention was to carve out a place of honour for slave girls in Islamic society. He wanted to

As for the first option, i.e. to have sexual relations on the basis of ownership rights, even that is permissible. The Qur'an has given an explicit permission to have sexual relations with 'those whom your right hands possess', without any caveat or condition whatsoever. And there is nothing truly despicable about this practice; it's all in the mind. Since we have got accustomed to the common and well recognized practice of marriages, we assume that the only permissible way in which a man and a woman can come together is by calling a *qazi*, having two witnesses, obtaining the consent of the bride and the groom, delivering the marriage sermon... and that all other forms of union are mere lustful adventures. However, Islam is not a conventional religion, but a rational one. It does not consider convention; it considers reality. A woman becomes permissible for a man through marriage for the sole reason that it is God's laws that have made her permissible for him. In the same vein, if God's laws make a bondswoman permissible for her owner, then what on earth is so despicable about it? The purpose of marriage is to restrict the carnal desires of man within certain limits, to make it abide by a system and to establish the mutual relations of a man and a woman in the form of a systematic civilized relationship. It is to meet this very purpose that we have been instructed to make an announcement of the marriage, to let the society know that this particular lady has now become exclusive for this particular man, that the child she would bear would belong to this man, and no other man is permitted to have any marital relations with this woman. All these objectives can be met by owning a slave girl as well. Everyone in society would be familiar

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present an example before the Muslims to teach them how they should treat this unfortunate class of human society. The enemies of Islam, however, have scandalized even this extremely noble act of the Prophet. If man becomes adamant at finding faults with something, there would not be a single act- however noble- that he wouldn't be able to find faults with!

with the fact that this particular woman is the bondswoman of that particular man. No other person is allowed to have sexual relations with this bondswoman unless and until her owner marries her off to that person. Thus, a woman being exclusive for a man is as well-known and established in society as a wife is for her husband. Moreover, if the bondswoman bears her master a child, she becomes a member of his family and is referred to as *Umme Walad* (mother of the child). She gets emancipated the moment her master passes away. Her child is considered legitimate and is even entitled to inherit from his/her father. Is this not similar to a valid marital relation?

Yes, there does exist an element of detestability in this practice, but it is of another kind. The woman with whom sexual relations are maintained without entering into marriage with her- only by virtue of her being one's bondswoman- remains a bondswoman nonetheless. She is not granted the status of *muhsinaat* (free respectable women) and her child lives with the ignominious tag of being a bastard. This is why the Prophet has preferred the first two options above this third one. He has recommended the practice of first emancipating her and granting her the status of a free respectable woman, and then marrying her as is the usual custom so that she develops the self respect that comes naturally to a respectable women. In this way, she would be able to get assimilated into our society as an equal. Neither would she be burdened with the blemish of being a slave-girl, nor would her child be called derogatory names.

Only two of your questions now remain unanswered. The first is that if a man is entitled to have sexual relations with his slave-girl by virtue of being her owner, then why is a woman not allowed to have sexual relations with her male slave? The second is that if non-Muslim enemies resort to the same treatment with their Muslim lady prisoners, then what moral right do we have to protest against the same? I have replied to these two questions in the following paragraphs:

A straightforward reply to the first question is that it is so because the Qur'an has given this right only to men and not to ladies. In the ayaat,

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِفُرُوجِهِمْ حٰفِظُونَ ۝٥ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ أَزْوَاجِهِمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ

"And they who guard their private parts, except from their wives or those their right hands possess, for indeed, they will (then) not be blamed"

[Surah alMu'minoon ayaat 5, 6]

and in many such similar ayaat, only the men are addressed, not the females.

One reason behind this is that society has always held a distinction between the husband and the wife. This distinction is imbibed in the very nature of human beings.[1] Women have a higher sense of chastity than men and it is also naturally expected of them that they would guard their chastity more than men do. A man indulging in profanities is not looked down upon in a way a woman is. A woman, once she loses her virginity, has her status devalued by half; but the worth of a man remains unaffected even if he has had married ten times earlier. If a woman flees with a man from another community, her entire community hangs their heads in shame. On the contrary, no one raises an eyebrow if a man has illicit relations with a woman of another community. This is part of human nature, and Islam has given it due consideration. At the same time, if this reaches the periphery of ignorance, Islam does not shy away from abolishing it either. For example, Islam allows Muslim men to marry women from the People of the Book but does not allow Muslim women to marry men from the People of the Book. But if a Jew or Christian man accepts Islam, Islam allows all Muslim ladies of however respectable a family to marry him without any reluctance whatsoever. Considering it detestable to marry him just

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[1] This is not the place to discuss the psychological and physiological aspects of this attitude. Those interested are requested to refer to the chapter, Qawaneen-e-Fitrat (Laws of Nature) in my book, Pardah.

because he is a freshly reverted Muslim is itself a detestable attitude in the sight of Islam.

If you understand this principle, you would easily understand why Islam does not grant permission to a lady to have sexual relations with her slave. Doing so would bring down her worth and honour in society. If a woman who has had sexual relations with her slave were to seek matrimonial alliance, it is highly improbable that any self-respecting man of her status would ever marry her. Moreover, the status of such a woman would depreciate in her own family as well. This is because the social status enjoyed by a woman is linked to her husband, and in this case the husband happens to be her slave who himself has no status in society! Having said that, if a slave is emancipated and he gains his freedom, the most respectable of ladies can marry him. The Prophet ﷺ had himself married his own cousin sister, Zainab with his emancipated slave, Zayd (God be pleased with them both).

The second and more important reason why a woman has not been allowed to have sexual relations with her slave is that while ownership of the slave can be similar to marriage in case of men, it cannot be so in the case of ladies. In the Islamic family set-up, the husband is the man of the house; he has been made manager over his wife. It is for this reason that a man is required to pay dower to his wife and he has been given a rank of authority over her, so that he might look after her, protect her and exercise those executive powers within his house that are necessary to ensure the smooth functioning of family life. This purpose can never be met if a lady were to have sexual relations with her slave. While having such relations with her slave might satisfy her carnal desires, it would definitely not satisfy the greater social objectives espoused by Islam that can only be achieved by the marital union of a man and a woman. In such a scenario, the man would be subservient to the woman by virtue of being her slave and would be deprived of the authority that a man requires to oversee the

moral and financial health of his family and maintain the discipline therein.

Coming to your final question, it seems that while penning down this question you were under the impression that the enemy used to treat its Muslim lady prisoners like their own sisters. Is that really so? And then you ask what moral right do we have in protesting against it? The reply, my dear, is that we were not inclined to enslave even their men, let alone their women. Had the enemy agreed to a prisoner exchange, we would not have insisted upon enslaving even a single man or woman from their camp. It is not we who are responsible for the custom of slavery being practised in this world for hundreds of years, by which the respectable ladies of one nation came to be utilized as bondswomen by men of another nation. The burden of guilt lies on those people who have refused to adopt a civilized and rational attitude concerning the prisoners of war for centuries together.

Tarjumanul Qur'an

(Jamad alAwal 1354 AH/ August 1935CE)

(2)

Question:

> "Islamic law allows a man to keep as many as four wives at any given time, not more. But there is no limitation to the number of bondswomen a man may keep. Why is this so? It apparently seems that this permission has rendered futile the restriction of having no more than four wives. It has opened up the doors for wealthy people to unbridled promiscuity. They have been given them the permission to purchase and fill their harems with as many slave girls as they please to give vent to their lust. This is not just a presumption, but an undeniable fact that has often been repeated in the pages of history. Can you offer a logical justification for the same?"

Reply:

The permission to maintain sexual relations with slave girls has been granted considering certain important social

objectives, which cannot be achieved if their numbers are restricted. It cannot be estimated how many slave girls would enter the Islamic frontiers in any given battle and what would be the proportion of such women in Islamic society at any given point of time. Now since the basic purpose of allowing sexual relations with them was to allay the dangers associated with their increased population, how can we impose a ceiling on the number of slave girls in one's ownership when we have no certain idea about the number of such slave girls that would increase after a battle? He who has made this law is not myopic; He looks at all possible angles of an issue. This makes His laws absolutely just and balanced, regardless of what others might think about it.

You have averred that such permission opens up avenues of sexual misconduct and promiscuity, and that the facility to sell and purchase slave girls would encourage wealthy men to keep purchasing slave girl upon slave girl to fill their harems to the brim and turn their homes into a hub of licentious activities. These and many such similar doubts usually arise because only one aspect of this issue is kept in mind, while the other aspect is totally ignored. Please understand one thing very clearly that God has made these laws for the benefit of mankind, and the allowances and concessions that exist therein have been incorporated keeping in mind those practical issues that a man usually faces or could possibly face. If some people misuse these allowances then this would be counted as their own ignorance or mischief. It would not be a wise step to introduce restrictions in a law and thus deprive other people from fulfilling their genuine needs from it out of fear that some individuals would make a mockery of this concession or just because some stray incidents of this kind might have been recorded in the past.

The permission granted by Islam to maintain sexual relations with an unrestricted number of slave girls was not intended at making people a personification of lust and

keeping them indulged in sex day in and day out. The actual purpose behind this permission was to easily accommodate a sudden influx of ladies in the society in the wake of some extraordinary circumstances, precluding the danger of giving rise to moral corruption. In order to ensure this, many options have been prescribed:

- Marry off the slave girls with slaves.
- The master may emancipate his slave girls and then marry her.
- The master may maintain sexual relations with his own slave girl without emancipating her.

Similarly, the objective of selling and purchasing slave girls had never been to allow libidinous men to purchase slave girls in large numbers to give vent to their lust and then sell them off in exchange of new ones. There were certain other factors that necessitated this allowance. For instance, a person has gone bankrupt and is no longer in a position to provide for the slaves/slave girls in his possession. Or let's say he has a surplus amount of slaves and slave girls. Or it might also be that he dislikes some of them. Can these genuine factors be overruled and this practice forbidden just out of an apprehension that the ones purchasing these slaves/ slave girls would probably misuse them? Such apprehensions are inherent to the laws of marriage and divorce as well. Is it not possible for a lecherous man to resort to 'lawful promiscuity' by marrying a lady by paying her some dower just to have sex with her and then divorcing her the next morning to seek another 'bride' for the next night? In view of these apprehensions, would it then be advisable to amend the laws of marriage and divorce and make them so constrained that it becomes difficult for the common man to abide by them?

Tarjumanul Qur'an

Rabiul Awwal- Rabiul Akhir 1359 AH/ May-June 1940 CE

(3)

Question:

1. Can the prisoners of war be enslaved in an Islamic system? Would it be permissible to sell and purchase these slaves and slave girls? Would it be permissible to maintain sexual relations with these salve girls despite having a wife? And is there no restriction to the number of such salve girls that can be kept in one's custody?
2. Would it be permissible to trade in slaves and slave girls (who are not prisoners of war) in Pakistan just like it is being done in the Arabian Peninsula?

Reply:

Islam allows for prisoners of war to be enslaved only when all other options have been exhausted. This means that neither is the belligerent enemy ready to exchange our prisoners for their own, nor is it willing to accept compensation money and release our prisoners, nor is it paying ransom to have their prisoners released from our custody. In such a scenario, the prisoners that have been left in one's camp would either be executed or they would be allowed to miserably rot and slog in concentration camps all their lives. It is obvious that these 'solutions' are not only inhumane, but it is also against the interests of this particular country to have a large population of prisoners residing on its land as a foreign entity. The solution Islam has adopted in this regard is to distribute these prisoners among the Muslims and to grant them a legal status. In this way, when each prisoner lives, eats and sleeps with a Muslim family, it is expected that he/she would be treated with due honour and respect and they would eventually- most, if not all- get assimilated into Muslim society.

Those Muslims who have been granted ownership of these prisoners of war have been instructed that if their slaves/slave girls request them permission to earn some money to buy back their freedom, they should compulsorily

grant them such permission. The owner would have to grant his slave/slave girl a specified period as per law to arrange for the money and then release him/her if the said amount is paid within that time frame.[1]

This permission to sell slaves and bondswomen is a means by which the owner transfers his right (to accept their emancipation fee and obtain their services until such a fee has been arranged) to another person in exchange of some money. You can fully appreciate the nature of this allowance granted by law only if you have had the experience of personally sheltering an enemy prisoner of war. Expecting services from an enemy soldier is not a piece of cake, nor is keeping a woman from the enemy camp in your house as easy as it sounds. Had it not been allowed for a man to dissociate himself from his slave/slave girl and transfer his ownership rights to someone else, these slaves would have made life a living hell for their owners.

What can possibly be a better solution for a lady prisoner of war (who has neither been exchanged for the Muslim prisoners nor released on ransom) than that the person to whom she has been allotted by the government is officially allowed to maintain sexual relations with her? If such a right has not been granted, these women would only serve as means to spread immorality in society. There is not much legal difference between ownership of a slave and a marriage contract. Rather, in the former case, it is the government that officially hands over the lady to the care of a man. Moreover, the social status of such a woman is such that no other man has any right to indulge in sexual relations with her. The child she bears is considered the progeny of her owner and he/she inherits from his/her

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[1] It has been mentioned in the 33rd ayat of Surah anNoor,

وَالَّذِيْنَ يَبْتَغُوْنَ الْكِتٰبَ مِمَّا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ فَكَاتِبُوْهُمْ اِنْ عَلِمْتُمْ فِيْهِمْ خَيْرًا

"And those who seek a contract (for eventual emancipation) from among whom your right hands possess - then make a contract with them if you know there is within them goodness, and give them from the wealth of Allah which He has given you."

father just as the other children born to his wife do. If the bondswoman bears her master a child, he is no longer allowed to sell her off, and she gets emancipated the moment her master passes away.

The number of bondswomen per person has not been limited because it is difficult to ascertain how many such ladies would be imprisoned in each battle. If suppose this number is very large, then what should be done with the surplus ladies in case the number of bondswomen per person has already been fixed at a certain number?

It is plain obvious that the men of wealth and authority who have misused the allowances granted by this law for their own ulterior motives have acted against the spirit of this law. If a wealthy man is hell bent upon fulfilling his lecherous motives by finding loopholes in law, then he can misuse the provisions of marriage as well. He can marry a new woman everyday and divorce her the next morning.

I am unaware of the alleged practice prevalent in the Arabian Peninsula. But as a general rule, I can definitely say that enslaving free people other than the prisoners of war and selling them off or purchasing them is absolutely forbidden in Islam.[1]

Tarjumanul Qur'an
Zil Qadah 1367 AH/ December 1948

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[1] For more details on the issue of slavery, the reader is requested to refer to my book, 'Rasail wa Masail' and Tafheemul Qur'an vol 1

The Language used for Prayers and the Friday Sermon

A gentleman[1] has sent us a long enquiry (seeking a religious edict) in which he writes:

1. "Is it true that Imam Abu Haneefah (God have mercy upon him) held the opinion that it is permissible to offer prayers in a language other than Arabic? If this is indeed so, would our present religious scholars ponder over this matter afresh and issue an edict permitting or forbidding the offering of prayers in a non-Arabic language?
2. The 43rd ayat of Surah anNisa', لَا تَقْرَبُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَأَنْتُمْ سُكٰرٰى حَتّٰى تَعْلَمُوْا مَا تَقُوْلُوْنَ *"O you who have believed, do not approach prayer while you are intoxicated until you know what you are saying"* instructs us not to offer prayers while intoxicated. The reason given is that in such a state a man is unable to understand what he is uttering. This proves that for prayers to be valid, it is a necessary precondition that a person should understand what he is saying in his prayers. Hence, if a person offers his prayers in his mother tongue and understands every word that he utters, then why should his prayer not be acceptable and valid?
3. Should the Eid and Friday sermons be delivered in the language understood by the audience or not? If not, why? What is the opinion of the religious scholars in this regard? It would be argued that it is impermissible

[1] It would interest you to note that this gentleman is the same Khan Bahadur whose letter we have discussed in an earlier chapter titled 'Prophet Joseph and Being Part of a non-Islamic Government'.

to do so because delivering the Eid and Friday sermons in a non-Arabic language is against the practice (*Sunnah*) of the Prophet ﷺ. But the practice of the Prophet was to use these sermons to convey the message of God to the audience, exhort them to follow the injunctions and warn them of the prohibitions contained therein, and to teach the audience the relevant commands and lessons. But if 99% of the audience fails to understand a word of what is being said in the sermon, how can they be expected to benefit from the guidelines issued in that address? And how can such a sermon be in accordance with the practice of the Prophet ﷺ?

Are the opportunities created for conveying the commands and prohibitions of Islam for the Muslim masses not rendered futile by restricting the Eid and Friday sermons to Arabic alone? Does this not render the sermon useless, given that it can hardly be understood by anyone from among the audience?

I am aware of the fact that certain people recite the Urdu couplets from 'Ilmi' in the Eid and Friday sermons. But in my opinion this practice goes against the consensus held by the religious scholars. Hence, it is necessary that they focus their kind attention towards this issue and make the masses aware of their stand in this regard."

Reply:

This is actually an enquiry (seeking a religious edict) which has primarily been addressed to religious scholars. Neither do I hold the position of issuing such edicts on religious matters, nor am I capable of shouldering such a responsibility. However, the respected supplicant has in good faith requested me to present my study on this topic as well. I shall, therefore, briefly clarify the Islamic injunctions related to the aforementioned questions. This

clarification should not be taken to be an edict (*fatwa*). I write this for the sole purpose that the scholars may go through it and accept it if they deem so fit.

Certain important points

Before embarking upon the topic under discussion, let us keep in mind certain important points that would help us in understanding the discussion that follows....

1. It is an established fact that Islamic laws are founded on wisdom and certain expediencies. God has never issued a command that is devoid of meaning or purpose; nor has He neglected the aspects of wisdom and prudence in prescribing a method to fulfil that command. If that is so, then it would also have to be accepted that Islamic laws cannot be truly followed without contemplating over it. It would be very difficult- rather impossible- for a man to follow Islamic law in all walks of life if he remains unaware of Islam's wisdom and purpose behind the issuance of a particular command or the prohibition of a certain entity, or if he does not understand what specific wisdom lies in the practical method prescribed by God for the fulfilment of that particular command and which supplementary components prove beneficial in what manner towards the fulfilment of that ultimate goal. He would possess only the body of Islamic law, not its spirit. He would not be able to reach the core of the issue. Not just in a few, but in almost all matters he would act in such a way that although it would appear as if he is abiding by Islamic law, the actual objective of the law would nevertheless be lost. This is because he would concentrate only on the bare and practical aspects of the concerned command and its supplementary components. The objective and rationale ingrained in those commands would totally escape his vision. How can he then be expected to adjust and fine tune those supplementary components

to his particular condition keeping its objective and rationale intact?

2. There is no doubt about the fact that God has demonstrated sublime prudence and wisdom by mostly employing those means to facilitate his commands that would prove equally effective at all times, at all places and in all given situations. Despite this, there do exist several details which need to be tweaked to confirm to the situation at hand. It is not necessary that the situation present at the blessed time of the Prophet ﷺ and his companions in the Arabian Peninsula and the Islamic world would exactly match those in every age and every place. Hence, to simply copy-paste the means that were adopted to fulfil Islamic injunctions in those particular circumstances to every age and situation, and to refrain from making any adjustments in its details in terms of the expedient requirements is nothing but a form of ritualism that is far removed from the spirit of Islam.

   Let us take an example. The Prophet ﷺ stipulated the prayer timings in accordance with the movements of the sun. This is because this is the most feasible way to determine the prayer timings in those latitudes. However, if a person residing near the North Pole were to insist upon determining prayer timings going by the same standards of sunrise and sunset and the lengthening and shortening of shadows then this would no doubt be in accordance with the letter of the law, but this would render futile the objective of the law and would instead be counted as a contravention of the concerned injunction. This is because such an act would inadvertently result in the prayer getting missed and the obligation remaining unfulfilled. From this we conclude that let alone the deductions and hints obtained from a command, even the principal command cannot be applied verbatim without due

contemplation. Such contemplation requires that man should keep in mind Islam's object and rationale behind every command and keep altering the supplementary details as per the changing situation in such a way that it confirms to the principles of Islamic law and adheres to the manner prescribed by it as closely as possible.

3. But contemplating over an issue does not mean that man should simply follow his personal whims and fancies even if it prods him to trespass the frontiers of Islam. This is not what Islam refers to as *tafaqquh* (contemplation). Rather, this is what the Qur'an calls 'following one's desires'. Self-indulgence necessarily leads to extremism; while balance and equilibrium are the most defining features of Islamic contemplation. A person who is a slave of his desires tends to vehemently incline towards any one single aspect of an issue or one point of advantage to such an extent that he completely ignores all other aspects thereof. On the contrary, Islamic contemplation offers due consideration to all aspects of an issue; and even if it does ignore any aspect, it is in view of a greater expediency that requires this minor aspect to be neglected. Then there is also a difference in the standards of the 'desirable' and 'undesirable' maintained between Islamic contemplation and self-indulgence. A self-indulgent man decides what is suitable and what is unsuitable, not on the basis of Islamic standards, but on the basis of his own personal inclinations, assuming some issues to be more important than others. In sharp contrast, Islamic contemplation requires you to adopt the Islamic point of view. You should consider desirable what Islam holds desirable and you should consider detrimental what is detrimental to the Islamic cause. Also, while determining how much desirable or detrimental

various factors are, you should employ the same standard that Islam approves of.

So let no person be naive enough to assume that following one's personal inclination can ever be regarded as 'contemplation', or that every other person has the innate right to change any injunction of Islam that he wishes following his own idea of Islamic jurisprudence. Absolutely not! Islamic contemplation does not allow you to give undue priority to what *you* consider expedient and in the process do away with plenty of those injunctions that Islamic law has mandated in its command. Nor are you allowed to consider, on your own accord, any particular aspect of the command so undesirable that to save yourself from it, you are willing to entertain many of those undesirable aspects that Islamic law wants to save you from. Rather, the Islamic idea of contemplation is that you should try to comprehend and encompass all the aspects and considerations of the given command and give each of them the same importance that Islam has itself given it, and make alterations in the supplementary details in such a way that they do not disturb the balance that has been established by Islam.

Please keep in mind that it is permissible to amend a method prescribed by Islam if and only if a change in the circumstances creates a situation wherein following the prescribed method makes it impossible to meet a crucial requirement of the law... crucial not on the basis of your personal inclinations, but from the Islamic point of view. Moreover, such an amendment can be carried out only to the extent that while securing that crucial legal requirement, other aspects of the law should not be compromised upon; and even if they are compromised, the status of those other aspects should be of comparatively lesser importance.

4. While deriving rulings from the practice of the Prophet ﷺ and his companions who were trained under him, we should always make a distinction between 'Islamic practice' and 'Habitual practice'. Islamic/legal practice (*Sharayi amal*) refers to such a practice that has been adopted on the basis that the objective of Islamic law can be fulfilled by employing that specific method alone. On the contrary, Habitual/ natural practice refers to that method that the Prophet ﷺ and his companions adopted on the basis of their personal taste and inclinations or in accordance with the social conditions prevalent in their country in that era.

   This second form of practice can most certainly be a vital source of guidance for us and we can learn many a lesson from it, but it would not be appropriate to derive Islamic injunctions on its basis. Islamic injunctions can be derived only from the first form of practice. The difference between the two is so evident in certain matters that anyone can distinguish between them. However, in certain other instances, these two forms of practices are so indiscernible from each other that it becomes extremely difficult to make out one from the other. This is where people tend to erroneously allot the status of one form of practice to the other, leading to inappropriate conclusions being derived by even the best of scholars. The Prophet ﷺ was a messenger, and at the same time a human being. He happened to be an Arab, belonging to a specific time and social environment. Each act of his- whether religious or worldly- had shades of all these aspects of his personality. Now since all these aspects ran parallel to each other and were simultaneous in nature, it used to become very challenging at times to determine which part of his actions related to his office of prophethood and could thus be used to derive Islamic legal injunctions, and which part came under the ambit

of the other form of practice which had no legal status per se.

This situation gets all the more perplexing when we look at the practice of the Prophet's companions (God be pleased with them all). The only reason why we regard their actions as a source of legal guidance is because they have received direct training from the Prophet ﷺ and have personally witnessed the execution of Islamic injunctions under the supervision of the Prophet. All other aspects of their personality, no matter how virtuous and worthy, do not qualify to grant legal status to their personal practices. Now it is often a tedious task to determine which of their actions, especially those related to *deen*, have been directly derived from the Islamic guidelines given by the Prophet ﷺ, which of those are based on their own opinions and derivations, and which of those are related to their personal tastes and tendencies or are influenced by the specific conditions of their time and place.

There is only one way by which we can determine which category a particular act falls under. The insight that a person gains after an erudite and in-depth study of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* allows him to discern the thin line between 'Islamic practice' and 'Habitual practice'; and it is his inner voice, his inclination that tells him whether a particular issue confirms with the nature of Islam or not, whether an aspect can be considered expedient to the Islamic cause or not, and whether a peg fits into the Islamic scheme of things or not. Since this is more subjective than objective in nature, there is a huge possibility of differences in opinion. One person's inclination and insight can never completely concur with the inclination and insight of another person even if they both have derived inferences from the same source. Hence, no person has

the exclusive right to declare that only *his* idea of an Islamic injunction is correct and that of another person is necessarily and definitely wrong.

Now that these things are clear, let us ponder over the issue of the language of prayers and the Friday sermon in two separate discussions. This is because there is an inherent difference between these two issues, although they might appear similar at first glance.

The Language of Prayers

The ayat that is often quoted these days to discuss the language that should be used in prayers is the one quoted by the questioner, the 43rd ayat of Surah anNisa', لَاتَقْرَبُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاَنْتُمْ سُكٰرٰى حَتّٰى تَعْلَمُوْا مَا تَقُوْلُوْنَ *"O you who have believed, do not approach prayer while you are intoxicated until you know what you are saying"*. However, the conclusion that is derived from this ayat is not appropriate. God has said *hatta ta'alamu* (until you know) not *hatta tafqahu* (until you contemplate) or *hatta tafhamu* (until you understand). By ignoring the fine difference between knowing and contemplating/understanding, people have assumed that it is necessary to understand the meaning and interpretation of each and every word and sentence during the prayer and pay attention to the meaning of every word recited therein; and until a person gains this understanding and attention, his prayer would not be proper. But this is not at all true. If the prayer of a person not knowing Arabic cannot be held valid for the sole reason that he does not understand what he is reciting in his prayers, then the prayer of an Arab should also not be considered valid if he is not offering his prayers with a presence of mind and is not attentive at the meaning of each and every word that he is reciting right from the beginning of his prayer to its end. If such strict conditions are imposed, there would hardly be any person who would be able to fulfil them in all his five daily prayers. A man is faced with all kinds of situations in his

life. At times he is sad, at times worried, at times his mind is preoccupied with other things, at other times some stray thoughts enter his mind and he does not even realize for quite some time that his mind is wandering away. If avoiding all mental and emotional distractions and concentrating on the prayer with unflinching attention is made a prerequisite for offering prayers, then it would be next to impossible to offer prayers at all.

These are those difficulties that an 'intelligent' man creates for himself. Islam has not imposed such difficulties upon him; it is cognizant of his weaknesses and limitations. While it has indeed recommended that a person should understand, be attentive and be humble in his prayers so as to make his prayer better and more beautiful, it has not stipulated this as a precondition without which the prayer would be rendered invalid.

The actual interpretation of this ayat

Now let us revisit the words of this ayat. Had it been necessary to understand and stay attentive towards the meaning of the words recited in the prayers for the prayer to be valid and if this was indeed the basis on which the instruction not to approach prayer in a state of intoxication was issued, then what was so unique about intoxication? It should also have been said that do not approach prayers when you are worried, or when you are sad or depressed or your mind is preoccupied with other things. In the same vein, there should also have been an instruction that if you feel that your mind is wandering away during the prayer, then discontinue your prayers and start afresh. But God has not issued any such restriction. All He has commanded us is to refrain from offering prayers in a state of intoxication; and the reason He has given is that in that state you have no knowledge of what you are saying. This clearly means that intoxication involves some kind of unawareness which differs from a lack of understanding or a lack of attentiveness. In an inebriated state, a person does not even

know if he is standing there to offer his prayers or for some other purpose, if he is reciting the Qur'an or something else, whether he is even facing the *qibla* or not.... He enters into a trance and loses control over himself. It is possible that he may start reciting a poem in the midst of the recitation, or he may utter something blasphemous, or shift his orientation from the *qibla* to some other direction, or suddenly forget that he is offering the prayer and leave the prayer midway to converse with someone or just leave the prayer-mat and wander away. This is precisely God's intention behind saying, 'until you know what you are saying'. In essence, 'When you cause yourself to enter into a state of inebriation out of your own foolishness, wherein you lose control over your tongue, mind and intellect, then don't you dare stand in My presence'.

The above explanation makes it clear that this ayat has got nothing to do with the issue of the language employed in the prayer. It is not appropriate to cite this ayat to claim that prayers should be offered in the devotee's language of comfort.

The difference of opinion among jurists

The question that lingers is whether it is necessary to offer the prayers in Arabic and would the prayers be invalid if offered in a non-Arabic language. Before offering my own reply to this question, allow me to present the views of the respectable jurists so that it becomes easier for us to understand the true status of this issue.

The ruling of Imam Abu Haneefah

Imam Abu Haneefah (God have mercy upon his soul) opines that it is permissible to offer prayers, call out the azan and sacrifice in the name of God in the Persian language, regardless of whether the person performing these acts is capable of doing so in the Arabic language or not. And there is nothing unique about Persian; his opinion

covers all languages for that matter.[1] The azan offered in the non-Arabic language, he avers, should be familiar to the people and those hearing it should recognize it as the call for prayer. He rests his opinion on what God says about the Qur'an in the 196th ayat of Surah ashShu'ara: وَإِنَّهُ لَفِي زُبُرِ الْأَوَّلِينَ *"And indeed it is (mentioned) in the scriptures of former peoples"*, and it is obvious that the Qur'an was not present in its current syntax in the former scriptures. Hence, it would have to be accepted that it was present in those scriptures in the form of the meaning held by its words. And since it was still the 'Qur'an' despite only its meaning being present therein, then what is the harm in considering the Persian translation of the Qur'an as the Qur'an itself and reciting that translation in the prayers?

Elsewhere, God has said, وَلَوْ جَعَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا أَعْجَمِيًّا *"Had We revealed this as a non-Arabic Qur'an...."* [Surah alFussilat ayat 44]. It means that this would still have remained the Qur'an had its meaning been conveyed in a non-Arabic language. Moreover, it has been narrated that those Persians who had recently accepted Islam had requested Salman the Persian (God be pleased with him) to write them the Surah Fatihah in Persian. He wrote it for them and they used to recite it in their prayers. They continued with this practice until they could start reading Arabic. Once they could do so, they began reciting it in Arabic. It is on the basis of these arguments that the respectable Imam insists that a person's prayer would be valid if he recites it in a non-Arabic language. However, he considers it as a detestable act because this is against the Sunnah (practice) of the Muslims at large. It should be noted that Abu Bakr Razi has written that Imam Abu Haneefah had later retracted this opinion as

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[1] Abu Saeed alBarwai has narrated a ruling of the Imam that it is not appropriate to recite it in a language other than Persian. However, Karkhi has written that the actual opinion of the Imam is that it is permissible to recite it in any language. The author of Hidayah has also concurred with this opinion.

well and accepted the opinions of Imam Abu Yusuf and Imam Muhammad.

The rulings of Imam Abu Yusuf and Imam Muhammad

Imam Abu Yusuf and Imam Muhammad opine that if a person is capable of reciting Arabic, then it is not proper for him to recite the prayer in a non-Arabic language. However, if he is inept at pronouncing the Arabic words, then he can recite it in a non-Arabic language. They derive their opinion from the fact that it has been commanded to recite the Qur'an in the prayers:فَاقْرَءُوْا مَا تَيَسَّرَ مِنَ الْقُرْاٰنِ *"So recite what is easy for you of the Qur'an"* [Surah alMuzammil ayat 20]. It is obvious that the translation of the Qur'an is not considered to be the 'Qur'an'. Thus, reciting the translation of the Qur'an instead of the Qur'an itself would invalidate the prayer. However, a person who is unable to pronounce the Arabic words would be considered helpless. God has not burdened anyone beyond his capacity. The prayer of such a person would be as valid as the prayer of a person who is unable to bow and prostrate because of some physical ailment and performs these postures using hand gestures.

The ruling of Imam Shafi'i

An opinion of Imam Shafi'i concurs with the opinion of Imam Abu Yusuf and Imam Muhammad that has been stated above. His second opinion is that the person who is unable to pronounce the Arabic words should offer the prayers without reciting anything. His prayers would get invalidated if he recites a translation. This is because the translation of the Qur'an is not the word of God, but the word of the person translating the Qur'an. God's word is nothing but the Arabic Qur'an, just as God has Himself

said, إِنَّآ أَنزَلْنَٰهُ قُرْءَٰنًا عَرَبِيًّا *"Indeed We have revealed it as an Arabic Qur'an"* [Surah Yusuf ayat 2].[1]

An overall analysis

The above details lead us to believe that the issue that our respectable elders were dealing with was whether the prayer offered in a non-Arabic language would be valid or not. Someone said it would be valid, but detestable. Someone else said that it would not be valid at all. A third person said that it would be valid for a helpless person just as it is valid for a disabled person to pray using gestures. However, the question our modern 'jurists' are engrossed in is of a totally opposite nature. They are busy debating whether the prayer of a person not knowing Arabic would be valid if offered in Arabic or not; and whether it is better for a non-Arab to offer his prayers in Arabic or in his mother tongue. Now since the nature of the issue has got reversed, the reply to this issue would also need a course correction.

The objective of Islamic law

Which language is most appropriate and preferred for prayer? The correct answer to this question is hinged upon the reply to another question- 'What is the status of prayer in Islam and what are the Islamic objectives associated with it?'

We have sought to make it clear at many previous occasions as well that the real objective of Islam is not merely the reformation of the individual or the purification of his soul. Rather, it wishes to make each and every individual pious and chaste and then group them together to create such a sublime and ideal society that would be able to fulfil the responsibility of God's vicegerency on earth.

[1] For a detailed discussion on this topic, please refer Kitab alMabsoot lilSarkhasi Vol 1, page 37, Fath alQadeer and Sharah alAnayah ala alHihayah Vol 1, pages 199-201.

For this purpose, it has prescribed all acts of worship in such a manner that along with instilling the quality of piety in every individual by directing them towards God it simultaneously assembles these individuals to form a righteous group. The most important of these acts of worship is prayer. It reforms the soul, propagates the guidance of the Qur'an, preserves the Qur'an and creates an assembly of Muslims all at once. By pondering over all these various aspects of prayer and these objectives of Islam, we come to know that prayer is not just a ritual by which a devotee supplicates his Lord, nor is it just a means of instilling piety in each person on an individual basis. Rather, it is a mode of establishment of Islam and there are much greater objectives associated with it.

As far as the fulfilment of individual objectives is concerned, it is required that the person understands what he is reciting in his prayers so that his inner self can be purified and reformed. From this perspective, it would indeed be beneficial if the person offers the prayer in a language that he knows and understands. However, this would preclude the attainment of the higher objective that Islam seeks to achieve.

First and foremost, the very important objective of preserving the Qur'an would be rendered unfulfilled to a large extent. Once people start considering the translation of the Qur'an as the Qur'an itself and it becomes widely acceptable that the translation holds as much value as the original for the purpose of worship and recitation, then people would tend to neglect the original Qur'an. People would lose interest in memorizing it and the translation would eventually replace the original for all practical purposes.

Secondly, neglecting the original scripture and laying emphasis on the translation would lead to total chaos. Every group and community would uphold its version of the Qur'anic translation as authentic. These translations would predominantly be flawed and mutually

contradictory. This would lead Islam to the same fate as Christianity and Judaism.

Third, this would disrupt the unity of the Muslim community. It would give rise to linguistic sects within Islam. The prayers and congregations of each linguistic group would be different and separate. Neither would an Iranian offer his prayer behind an Arab imam, nor would a Turk join a congregation of Indian devotees. Bengalis, Tamilians and Punjabis would all offer prayers in separate congregations on the basis of this linguistic sectarianism. This lack of unity in prayers would lead to a disintegration of the Muslim community.

Thus, in order to avoid these apocalyptic eventualities, it is imperative that there should exist a single universal language for prayer and that language should be the one in which the Qur'an has been revealed. As for the individual disadvantage, it is not so difficult to solve. Most of the gestures employed in prayers are repetitive. *Takbeer, tasbeeh, tasmeeyah, ta'awwuz*, Surah alFatihah, *tashahhud* and other such recitations are such that one can easily learn their meanings in an hour or two. The Qur'anic *surahs* that are commonly recited in prayer are very short and do not number more than ten to twelve. Learning their meanings is also not too uphill a task. Apart from these, we have some long passages of the Qur'an that are occasionally recited along with Surah alFatihah. But it does not make much of a difference if certain or most of the people in the congregation do not understand their meaning. Judging all the pros and cons, it is not at all prudent to forego all the benefits of adopting the Arabic language just to fulfil this meagre (and unessential) requirement.

Arguments from the Qur'an

Apart from the expediencies involved, if we focus on the injunctions laid down by the Qur'an, we arrive at a conclusion that the ruling adopted by Imam Abu Yusuf and

Imam Muhammad is the most correct in this regard. And it is understood that Imam Abu Haneefah had also eventually concurred with their opinions.

1. The Qur'an clearly commands us to recite the Qur'an in the prayer:

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الْمُزَّمِّلُ ۙ قُمِ الَّيْلَ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ۙ نِّصْفَهٗۤ اَوِ انْقُصْ مِنْهُ قَلِيْلًا ۙ اَوْ زِدْ عَلَيْهِ وَرَتِّلِ الْقُرْاٰنَ تَرْتِيْلًا ؕ

"O you who wraps himself [in clothing],
Arise [to pray] the night, except for a little -
Half of it - or subtract from it a little
Or add to it, and recite the Qur'an with measured recitation."

[Surah alMuzammil ayaat 1-4]

اِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَعْلَمُ اَنَّكَ تَقُوْمُ اَدْنٰى مِنْ ثُلُثَيِ الَّيْلِ وَنِصْفَهٗ وَثُلُثَهٗ وَطَآئِفَةٌ مِّنَ الَّذِيْنَ مَعَكَ ..... فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ فَاقْرَءُوْا مَا تَيَسَّرَ مِنَ الْقُرْاٰنِ ؕ

"Indeed, your Lord knows, [O Muhammad], that you stand [in prayer] almost two thirds of the night or half of it or a third of it, and [so do] a group of those with you. And Allah determines [the extent of] the night and the day. He has known that you [Muslims] will not be able to do it and has turned to you in forgiveness, so recite what is easy [for you] of the Qur'an."

[Surah alMuzammil ayat 20]

اَقِمِ الصَّلٰوةَ لِدُلُوْكِ الشَّمْسِ اِلٰى غَسَقِ الَّيْلِ وَقُرْاٰنَ الْفَجْرِ ؕ اِنَّ قُرْاٰنَ الْفَجْرِ كَانَ مَشْهُوْدًا ۞

"Establish prayer at the decline of the sun [from its meridian] until the darkness of the night and [also] the Qur'an of dawn. Indeed, the recitation of dawn is ever witnessed." *[Surah Bani Israil ayat 78]*

All these ayaat enjoin upon us to recite the Qur'an in our prayers. And in all these ayaat, the word used is *alQur'an* (the Qur'an), which cannot allude to the

translation of the Qur'an, whether taken in the literary sense or the literal sense.

2. There are various passages in the Qur'an which state that 'Qur'an' refers to the Arabic Qur'an only; the Book of God is only that one which has been revealed in the Arabic language. In other words, the meaning of the Qur'an (even if it is written in the Arabic language) would not be the Qur'an or anything like it. Hence, translations can never replace the Qur'an.

وَكَذٰلِكَ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ قُرْاٰنًا عَرَبِيًّا

"And thus We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an"
[Surah TaHa ayat 113]

اِنَّآ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ قُرْءٰنًا عَرَبِيًّا

"Indeed, We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an"
[Surah Yusuf ayat 2]

قُرْاٰنًا عَرَبِيًّا غَيْرَ ذِىْ عِوَجٍ

"[It is] an Arabic Qur'an, without any deviance"
[Surah azZumar ayat 28]

تَنْزِيْلٌ مِّنَ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ ۝ كِتٰبٌ فُصِّلَتْ اٰيٰتُهٗ قُرْاٰنًا عَرَبِيًّا

"[This is] a revelation from the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful -
A Book whose verses have been detailed, an Arabic Qur'an" [Surah HaMeem Sajdah ayaat 2-3]

فَاِنَّمَا يَسَّرْنٰهُ بِلِسَانِكَ

"So (O Muhammad), We have only made it (i.e. the Qur'an) easy in your tongue (i.e. the Arabic language)" [Surah Maryam ayat 97]

قُلْ لَّئِنِ اجْتَمَعَتِ الْاِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلٰٓى اَنْ يَّاْتُوْا بِمِثْلِ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنِ لَا يَاْتُوْنَ بِمِثْلِهٖ

"Say, "If mankind and the jinn gathered in order to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce the like of it" *[Surah Bani Israil ayat 88]*

3. It is also mentioned in the Qur'an that the assurance of safeguarding it from all forms of corruption is related only to the book that has been revealed by God:

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ ﴿٩﴾

"Indeed, it is We who sent down the Qur'an and indeed, We will be its guardian."
[Surah alHijr ayat 9... Translator]

This assurance does not cover the translations prepared by human beings. The latter are open to all forms of corruption- whether deliberate or on the basis of a lack of knowledge or understanding or ability of the translator concerned.

وَإِنَّهُ لَكِتَابٌ عَزِيزٌ ﴿٤١﴾ لَا يَأْتِيهِ الْبَاطِلُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَلَا مِنْ خَلْفِهِ تَنْزِيلٌ مِنْ حَكِيمٍ حَمِيدٍ ﴿٤٢﴾

"And indeed, it is a mighty Book. Falsehood cannot approach it from before it or from behind it; [it is] a revelation from a [Lord who is] Wise and Praiseworthy." *[Surah HaMeem Sajdah ayaat 41-42]*

Hence, a person reciting the translation of the Qur'an can never claim that he is reciting the exact meaning of the revealed Qur'an.

4. The essence of prayer, i.e. developing a relation with God and piety and turning towards Him can only be achieved by the Qur'an that has been revealed by God. Other literary works neither have that essence, nor can they ever be expected to have it within them. The Qur'an testifies to this fact when it says:

اللَّهُ نَزَّلَ أَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيثِ كِتَابًا مُتَشَابِهًا مَثَانِيَ تَقْشَعِرُّ مِنْهُ جُلُودُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ ثُمَّ تَلِينُ جُلُودُهُمْ وَقُلُوبُهُمْ إِلَىٰ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ

"Allah has sent down the best statement: a consistent Book wherein is reiteration. The skins shiver therefrom of those who fear their Lord; then their skins and their hearts relax at the remembrance of Allah"

[Surah azZumar ayat 23]

Conclusion:

After considering these explicit injunctions of the Qur'an, it becomes very difficult to maintain that the prayer in which the translation of the Qur'an is recited could ever be proper. Not just detestable, in my opinion it would not even be sufficient to fulfil the obligation of prayer. However, I agree with the two Imams that the case of a person who is absolutely unable to pronounce the Arabic words is totally different. In his case, the most appropriate ruling is that his non-Arabic recitation would be valid until he is able to recite the Qur'an in Arabic. This is because his case comes under the category of special disability.

The Language of the Friday Sermon

Now, let us focus on the second aspect of the question. It relates to the language that is to be used for the Friday sermon. A common error that is committed in this regard is that the issue of language of the sermon is confused with the issue of language of the prayer. Hence, we shall first explain the difference in status between the prayer and the sermon.

The Sermon is not part of the Friday prayers

Certain people feel that the sermon is part of the Friday prayer. They argue that it is because of the sermon that the four cycles offered in *zuhr* have been shortened to two, as is narrated in the Hadith narrated by Umar and Lady Aishah (God be pleased with them). The Hadith says that, 'The Friday prayers have been shortened for the sermon'. On the base of this Hadith, they say that since the sermon is

a substitute for the two cycles of prayer, its status is the same as that of the prayers. They thereby conclude that just as the prayers cannot be offered in a non-Arabic language, the sermon can also not be delivered in a language other than Arabic.

But this is just a crude opinion. When we study the details of their respective injunctions, we come to know that the conditions necessary for prayers are not necessary for the sermon. For example:

- It is necessary to be clean for prayers, but not for the sermon. Even if a person mistakenly delivers the sermon while he is ritually impure due to ejaculation, there is no need to repeat it.
- It is also necessary to face the Qiblah while offering the prayers. However, not only is it unnecessary to do so while delivering the sermon, it has been commanded that the sermon should be delivered facing the devotees, with one's back to the Qiblah.
- Speaking during the prayers violates it. However, one can speak during the sermon. We shall see in the following pages that even the Prophet ﷺ and his companions have spoken while delivering the sermon.
- The prayers are time-bound. However, there is no harm if the sermon is started before the time begins.
- As per the Hanafi school of thought, the Friday prayer requires a minimum attendance of three people. However, the sermon can be delivered even if there is a single person apart from the Imam.
- If the Friday prayer gets violated, it needs to be repeated. However, the sermon would not be repeated.

All these points tell us that the sermon is not a part of the Friday prayers. Allamah Sarkhasi writes:

> *"Some of our scholars say that since the sermon is a substitute for the two cycles of prayer, it is not permissible to deliver the sermon before the time of*

zuhr begins. However, the correct stand is that the sermon is not a part of the prayers."

[alMabsoot Vol 8, Kitaab alJuma'a]

In Sharah alAnayah ala alHidayah, it is written:

"The sermon is not a rukn (part/pillar/member) of the prayers. This is because a rukn is something by which that thing gets established. The Friday prayers are not established by the sermon; rather, it is established by its own parts. Hence, the sermon is not a part of the prayers, but a condition for the prayers to be valid."

The difference between the purpose of the prayer and the sermon

There is no doubt about the fact that the sermon and prayers are both acts of worship. However, there is a difference in their objectives. The purpose that is sought to be achieved through prayers can be achieved even if the person offering the prayers remains oblivious of the meaning of what is being recited therein. The purpose of prayers is sufficiently met if the person offering the prayers regards the obligatory prayers as obligatory upon him, stands up to offer the prayers at their stipulated times, then offers the prayers with all its components intact and fulfils all its inherent conditions such that he acknowledges that God is listening to whatever he is reciting, and that God would come to know if he deducts anything from the prayer, that all his standing and bowing and prostrating and sitting during the prayer is for God alone and that he does not perform these acts of worship for anyone but God. However, the purpose of the sermon cannot be achieved if the audience does not understand what is being said. This is because the purpose of the sermon is not only to remember God, to turn towards Him and become pious and repentant, but it also involves conveying and teaching the injunctions of *deen* and instructing the people on Islamic values. This purpose is not fulfilled if the audience is unable to

understand the teachings and injunctions that are expounded in the sermon.

The purpose of the sermon

Some people do not agree that the purpose of the sermon is the conveying of injunctions and teachings or instructing the people about Islamic values. They say that God has referred to the sermon in the Qur'an by using the words 'zikrullah' (Remembrance of God). This means that the sermon is also an act of worship similar to the prayer and hence it is not necessary for people to understand it. In support of this stance, they cite the statement of Imam Abu Haneefah, wherein he has said that the sermon would be delivered even if only the praise and gratitude of God is recited; whatever is usually recited in the name of 'sermon' is not a prerequisite for the Friday prayers. They also argue that when Usman (God be pleased with him) became the Caliph and rose to deliver the sermon, he was overawed by the presence of the crowd and all he said was 'Alhamdulillah' and sat down. The congregation of the blessed companions did not object to this.

However, there are a number of reasons why the conclusions derived from these references are incorrect....

1. First and foremost, it has not been established that the 'remembrance of God' that has been mentioned in the ayat alludes to the sermon. The remembrance of God can also mean prayer. The Qur'an has almost always used this phrase to refer to prayers. The exegetes and the jurists have a difference of opinion on whether the phrase refers only to the sermon, only to the prayer or both[1]. But when we look at the context of the ayat, it

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[1] Ibn Humam writes in Fath alQadeer: "What is apparent from the remembrance is prayer, and there is a possibility that it could mean the sermon" and the author of Rooh alMa'ani writes, "What is meant by remembrance of God is both prayer and sermon. What is apparent is that it alludes to prayer, there being a possibility that it could mean the sermon as well". Saeed ibn Musayyib says that remembrance

seems to refer to the Friday prayers. The ayat [9th ayat of Surah alJuma'a] begins with فَاسْعَوْا إِلَىٰ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ *'O you who have believed, when the (adhan) is called out for the prayer on the day of Friday'*, followed by 'then proceed to the remembrance of Allah'. This shows that remembrance actually refers to prayer, and the sermon simply gets added to the remembrance. Had remembrance only meant 'sermon', then it would have been said, *'proceed to the remembrance of Allah and the prayer'*.

2. If the remembrance of God is not taken to mean the prayer, but taken in its literal sense, then how does one conclude that God can be remembered only through the Arabic language? It is against logic and deduction to confine the remembrance of God to the Arabic language. The Qur'an and Hadith never tell us that if you want to remember God, then do so only in the Arabic tongue. It is on this basis that Imam Abu Haneefah states that, "Just as it is appropriate to say 'Allahu Akbar' to proclaim the greatness of God (in Arabic), it is also appropriate to say 'Khuda Buzurg Ast' (in the Persian tongue)". Imam Muhammad concurs with him by saying that "God can be remembered in all languages".
3. If the Hanafi jurists have considered the glorification and praise of God sufficient to meet the conditions required for the validity of the sermon, then how does this come to mean that the purpose of the sermon is achieved only by glorifying and praising God and that whatever is said beyond that is 'extra', having no relevance whatsoever?[1] The Hanafi jurists also say that

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alludes to the admonishment of the Imam. In Ahkaam alQur'an, Allamah Abu Bakr alJassas opines that remembrance refers only to the sermon.

[1] It is not right to cite the example of Caliph Usman's incident to arrive at that conclusion. To begin with, the incident itself has the clarification that Caliph Usman did not do so deliberately; rather, he

the Friday prayers would be valid even if three people attend the congregation. Then should we assume that the purpose for which the Friday prayers have been instituted is achieved by the mere presence of three men and that there is no need to have a large congregation?

4. The Hanafi jurists have themselves clarified that the purpose of the sermon is to instruct people and to educate them. Accordingly, it has been mentioned in Hidayah that, "It is alright if the Imam delivers the sermon sitting down or in a state of ritual impurity, because the objective of the sermon would still be met". Allamah ibn Humam elaborates upon this objective by saying that it alludes to the 'remembrance of God and conveying teachings'. And not just the Hanafi jurists, all the schools of thought are unanimous that this is the very objective of the Friday sermon, and this is why they usually refer to the sermon as 'admonishment of the Imam'. While explaining a Hadith, Allamah Ibn Hajar writes in Fath alBaari,
"The purpose behind instructing the devotees to sit facing the Imam is that they might be ready to listen to his speech and follow proper etiquettes in doing so. When the listener would face him and focus his attention towards him with all his heart, body and soul and listen to the sermon with his presence of mind, he would properly understand what the Imam is admonishing them, and it would help achieve the

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was overawed by the presence of the crowd and he lost the confidence to speak to them, forcing him to shorten the sermon. Secondly, it is not true that all he did was glorify and praise God. Instead, when he realized that he was having butterflies in his stomach, he simply uttered the following statement and sat down: "Abu Bakr and Umar used to come prepared with speeches for this occasion. What you actually need is an Imam who works, not an Imam who speaks. As for the speech, that would also be delivered in days to come. I ask God to forgive me and you".

purpose for which the Imam has been instructed to stand and deliver the sermon." *[Vol 2, Page 273]*

5. It is worth giving a thought that had the objective of Islam behind prescribing the sermon only been the remembrance of God, then was the prayer not sufficient enough to achieve this objective? The prayer fulfils this objective in a manner no sermon can. Why was it that an act of worship as complete and perfect as prayer was shortened to make way for the sermon and then this sermon was considered to be of so much importance that its deliverance was declared to be a prerequisite for the validity of the Friday prayers?

6. It is the uninterrupted practice of the Prophet ﷺ that has led the Hanafi jurists to declare the sermon a prerequisite for the Friday prayers. Since the Prophet ﷺ, the Caliphs and the companions (God be pleased with them all) have never had the Friday prayer without a sermon, it was considered to be a condition for the Friday prayers to be complete. In the same way, the uninterrupted practice of the Prophet and the companions also tells us that the sermon was not merely a glorification and praise of God. Instead, it urged the people to inculcate the fear of God, the injunctions of Islam were expounded, it contained admonishments dealing with the reformation of one's morals and conduct and it also focused on individual and community affairs, to the point that the Imam used to rectify the behaviour of a person present in the audience if he would see something in him that required him to do so and he would ask the people to help a person if he saw someone in need of their assistance. If someone from the audience had any complaint, he would present it before the Imam and the Imam would address it. Just as the Prophet ﷺ and his companions have never had the Friday prayers without

the sermon, so also they have never had a sermon without the aforementioned elements.

Some Sermons of the Prophet ﷺ

In order to further explain this last point, allow me to present here a few of the Prophet's sermons. These sermons mirror the purpose for which God has prescribed the sermon....

Ubaid bin Asbaq (God be pleased with him) narrates that the Prophet ﷺ once said the following words in the Friday sermon:

"O Muslims! God has declared this day to be an Eid (celebration). So do have a bath this day. And if someone has some perfume, why should he not apply it? And do brush your teeth as well."

[Muwatta and Ibn Majah]

Abu Saeed Khudri narrates that while delivering the sermon, the Prophet ﷺ remarked, "The thing that I fear most in your case is the blessings of the land." Someone asked, "What do you mean by the blessings of the land, O messenger of God?" The Prophet replied, "The pleasures of the world." At this, another person asked, "Can the good bring forth evil?" The Prophet remained silent for a few moments, making people assume that he was being inspired divinely. He then wiped off the sweat from his forehead and asked, "Where is the one who asked this question?" He responded saying, "Here I am." The Prophet said, "Good brings forth nothing but good. The wealth of this world is (like) green and sweet (fruit) and the vegetation that grows on the bank of a stream either kills or nearly kills the animal that eats too much of it, except the animal that eats till its stomach is full and then it faces the sun and starts ruminating and then it passes out dung and urine and goes to eat again. This worldly wealth is (like) sweet (fruit), and if a person

earns it (the wealth) in a legal way and spends it properly, then it is an excellent helper, and whoever earns it in an illegal way, he will be like the one who eats but is never satisfied."

[Bukhari, Kitaab alRiqaaq wa Kitaab azZakaat]

Amr Bin Taghlab narrates that the Prophet ﷺ once received some wealth and the Prophet distributed it among certain people, leaving out some other people. He later came to know that those who had been left devoid of the wealth were feeling upset. The Prophet spoke about this in his sermon saying, "I give (wealth) to a person and do not give another person. The person I do not give (the wealth) is dearer to me than the person whom I give (the wealth). I observe that there is a group whose hearts are not at peace and satisfaction and hence I give it to them, while I leave another group with the goodness and satisfaction that God has cultivated in their hearts." [Bukhari]

There is a renowned Hadith that a person arrived for the Friday prayers when the Prophet ﷺ was busy delivering the sermon. The Prophet called him out and asked, "O man! Have you offered your prayers?" The man said no. The Prophet asked him to get up and offer his prayers. Actually this man was in rags, and the Prophet wanted the people to witness his sorry condition. When he was done with his prayers, the Prophet encouraged the people to offer charity. This Hadith has been narrated with slight variations in almost all major compilations of Hadith. In Imam Ahmad's compilation, the Prophet's own words have been reproduced as, "When this person entered the masjid, I observed that he was in a very shabby state. Hence, I asked him to offer two cycles of prayers. I wished that someone would witness his condition and offer him some charity."

In another Hadith, we have that the Prophet ﷺ was delivering the sermon when he noticed that a person was moving ahead stepping over the necks of people.

The Prophet called out to him and said, "Sit down. You have disturbed people." [Abu Dawood and Nisai]
Anas bin Malik (God be pleased with him) narrates that the Prophet ﷺ was once delivering the sermon during the famine. A person submitted, "O Messenger of God! The animals have died and family members are starving. Please supplicate to God to send some showers." The Prophet immediately supplicated, and by the grace of God it began raining, and it continued raining till the next Friday. Next week, when the Prophet rose to deliver the Friday sermon, the same person stood up and said, "O Messenger of God, the houses have collapsed and our property is getting damaged. Please supplicate to God. At this, the Prophet raised his hands in supplication once again."
It is well known that while Caliph Umar (God be pleased with him) was once delivering the sermon, Usman (God be pleased with him) entered the masjid. Caliph Umar remarked, "What is wrong with people that they delay coming to the prayers even after the call for the prayers has been announced!" He then turned to Usman and asked him, "What time is it?" Usman replied, "I was busy with some work. When I heard the call for prayers, I made my ablutions and directly came here instead of going home." Hearing this, Umar said, "Very well! You have already arrived late, and now it transpires that you have settled for ablutions, whereas you are aware that the Prophet ﷺ has commanded us to have a bath on Friday."
[Bukhari, Muwatta, Muslim]

These are but few of those numerous sermons delivered by the Prophet ﷺ and his companions (God be pleased with them) that we find mentioned in authentic aHadith. When we go through them, we realize that they used this opportunity (of delivering the sermon, which has been considered a precondition for the Friday prayers) not

only for the remembrance of God, but also to convey, educate, reform, guide and look in to various individual and social matters. The purpose of initiating this practice was not that people might come to the masjid once a week and listen to some ritualistic recitation before the prayers, mimicking the sermon delivered in churches. Rather, this was meant to be an active and beneficial aspect of the social lives of Muslims, the purpose of which was to compulsorily gather people once a week and convey to them the commands of God, relate to them the teachings of Islam, reform the things that need to be rectified in their individual and collective lives and to turn their attention towards their social responsibilities. Along with this, the Friday sermon also served as a medium by which the leader used to directly convey government policies to the masses and the people used to get a chance to present their apprehensions and grievances before their rulers.

Another difference between the Prayer and the Sermon

Yet another difference between the prayer and the sermon is that whatever is recited in the prayer has been pre-designated along with its specific words. A person who does not understand Arabic can very easily memorize their translation in a few hours or at least keep their meanings in mind. Hence, there is no cause to fear that the person who does not understand Arabic would be left completely bereft of the benefits derived from understanding the meaning of whatever is being recited therein. In contrast, there is no standard sermon that has been fixed. There is a new sermon that is delivered every Friday and it is absolutely impossible for people to memorize its translation or understand its meaning beforehand. Hence, making the Arabic language a compulsory medium for the sermon would naturally make it a meaningless recitation and a bland religious ritual for those who cannot understand the language. This would render futile all those objectives that Islam would like to have achieved from the sermon. Even a

person of average intelligence can appreciate the fact that addressing a Turk in Sanskrit or delivering a German lecture to a Persian is a useless thing to do. Then how can it be expected from the Wise Lord that He would command us to use a foreign language to convey the injunctions of *deen* and teach morals and values to the people, despite the fact that they just cannot understand it?

What we conclude from the above discussion

We understand three things from whatever has been discussed so far:

1. The sermon is not an integral part of the Friday prayers. Hence, the Arabic language should not be considered mandatory for the sermon just because it is mandatory for the prayers.
2. None of the objectives that are sought to be fulfilled from the sermon would ever be achieved if the sermon is delivered in a language that the people cannot understand. On the contrary, none of the important objectives of prayer are left unfulfilled if it is recited in an unfamiliar language. In other words, inability to understand the language only has a minor effect on the prayers, but such inability adversely affects the entire sermon.
3. The minor problem that is faced in prayers because of one's inability to understand the language recited therein can very easily be solved, but there is no way to solve the enormous problem that is faced due to one's inability to understand the sermon.

Hurdles in a non-Arabic sermon... First argument

We should now see if there are any legal hurdles in delivering the sermon in a non-Arabic language. When we go through the Qur'an and the Sunnah, we do not find any obvious or even apparent command that makes it compulsory to deliver the sermon in Arabic. Even those

who stress upon the compulsion of using the Arabic language do not present any ayat or Hadith in their support. All they argue is that the Prophet ﷺ, his companions and the righteous elders have always delivered the sermon in Arabic. They reason that at times there used to be non-Arabs in the Prophet's gatherings as well, but there has never been a case in which the Prophet addressed them in a non-Arabic language or asked a companion familiar with the non-Arabic tongue to translate his sermon to them. After the Prophet ﷺ, it was his companions (God be pleased with them all) who were foremost in the cause of propagating Islam and conveying its message to the world. Moreover, in their era, a lot of such foreign lands were also conquered and brought under Islamic rule whose residents could not understand Arabic. Despite this, these elders have never delivered the sermon in a non-Arabic tongue. This is precisely why a very big group from the first to the last has opined that delivering the sermon in Arabic is a prerequisite for the sermon to be proper and the Sunnah to be followed. It is only Imam Abu Haneefah who considers the non-Arabic sermon to be valid. There is no one else among the elders who holds it permissible[1].

A critical analysis of the above argument

There are a number of basic errors in this argument. The first thing is that these people do not differentiate between an 'Islamic/Legal act' and a 'Natural/Habitual act'. We have already discussed their details in the beginning of this chapter. It is obvious that the Prophet's tongue was Arabic. His addressees were also Arabs, or those foreigners who lived among the Arabs and had become familiar with the Arabic tongue. Take Salman the

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[1] Certain sources tell us that Imam Muhammad and Imam Abu Yusuf concurred with Imam Abu Haneefah in this issue. Other sources tell us that they considered the non-Arabic sermon permissible only for that person who is unable to deliver the sermon in Arabic.

Persian for example. In which language other than Arabic should the Prophet ﷺ have addressed them? It is a natural act for an Arab Prophet to address his Arab audience in Arabic. How and why should it be taken as a legal argument? It would have been a legal argument had the Prophet ﷺ issued instructions for the sermon to be delivered only in the Arabic language, exclusive of all other languages. But since the Prophet has not issued any such decree, the Arabic sermon cannot be declared a 'Sunnah' just because the Prophet happened to deliver his sermons in Arabic. If one were to declare all such natural/habitual acts as Sunnah, then even conversing in the Arabic language would be declared a Sunnah. After all, the Prophet has always conversed with people all his life in the Arabic tongue and there is no proof whatsoever that he has spoken to anyone in a non-Arabic language, right? One can argue that the Prophet's usage of the Arabic language in prayers should also then be termed as his habitual act. Why then do you see it as a legal act? The answer to this argument is that the prayers are not recited in Arabic merely because the Prophet used to recite them in Arabic. There is a legal command present here in addition to it being the habitual practice of the Prophet ﷺ. Moreover, there are many points of wisdom behind it that have already been discussed in the preceding pages. The recitation of the prayers in Arabic is thus incumbent upon us. In contrast, there is no wisdom or expediency involved in delivering an Arabic sermon in front of those people who cannot understand Arabic. On the contrary, in such a case, the objectives of the sermon remain unfulfilled and are even rendered futile. Hence, this opinion cannot be accepted on the mere assertion that the Prophet ﷺ has always delivered the sermon in the Arabic language.

The second error in this argument is that the difference in the age and situation has been totally neglected. The foreigners who used to participate in the gatherings of the

Prophet were overwhelmingly those people who were familiar with the Arabic language. And even if there indeed were a couple of such foreigners at any given sermon who did not understand Arabic, then it is obvious that the entire sermon can never be delivered in a language that benefits just a handful of men[1].

When the companions conquered foreign lands, their status in those lands was that of rulers. They had political power. They were dominant, not suppressed. They were not in need of advice; rather they used to advise others. They had the clout to spread their language in the conquered lands, and this is precisely what they did from Bukhara in Central Asia to Spain in South-western Europe. There was a time when the native languages of most of these lands started becoming threatened by the influence of the Arabic language. Why then, should they have abandoned their own language and adopted the language of the conquered territories to deliver the Friday sermon?

However, today the situation is not the same. It has been ages since the influence of Arabic has waned off. There has been no prevalence of Arabic in most of the Islamic countries since many centuries now, and whatever is left is fast fading off because of the decline in its political and academic value. Arabic no longer has the power to spread and to dominate other languages. It is no longer prudent to insist on the practice adopted by the companions and their close contemporaries in their time of dominance.

The third error in this argument is that the opinion adopted by the elders in a particular context is being given the legal status of consensus. As we have already mentioned, all these elders belonged to an age when Islam was dominant and a reigning power. Although Islam had

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[1] It should be noted here that the Prophet has had his secretary, Zaid bin Sabit trained in the Aramaic language so as to establish communication with foreigners [allstiaab Ibn Abul Barr. Vol 1, page 189]. It is also known that certain other companions had also learnt foreign languages.

liberated them of all racial, national and linguistic prejudices, it was but natural for them to show signs of those traits that naturally arise in every dominant community. The fact that they refrained from adopting the languages of the conquered nations, protected themselves from their languages and tried to spread their own language among them was a natural thing to do and is expected from any nation that conquers another. The icing on the cake was that their language was the language of the Qur'an and the Hadith. The entire Islamic literature was in Arabic. The protection of the true spirit of Islam was hinged upon the safeguard of the Arabic language. This had increased their emotions of Arab patriotism at least as far as their language was concerned. This is the reason why the elders never preferred to speak in non-Arabic tongues, to the point that they detested even the usage of non-Arabic words. Caliph Umar used to tell them, "Do not learn the tongues of foreigners". Caliph Ali was once presented with a gift on the occasion of Nauroz (Persian New Year). He asked them what it was. They told him it was Nauroz that day. The mention of the word Nauroz made him feel very uncomfortable. When Muhammad, the son of Sa'ad bin Abi Waqqas overheard a group of men speaking in Persian, he exclaimed, "From where is this Zoroastrianism penetrating our people?" Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal was once asked about supplicating in a non-Arabic language. He replied that it was a bad language. Imam Malik used to prevent people from supplicating or taking oaths in non-Arabic languages. Imam Shafi'i used to declare speaking in any language except Arabic as detestable. Similar is the case with all the jurists of that time. They considered it deplorable to use any non-Arabic language, especially if it had to do with supplications and remembrance of God. If you ponder over this stance taken by these elders, you would realize that this was not on the basis of any legal ground; rather, it had a lot to do with their natural tendencies and they were given to adopt such a view under

the influence of the reigning conditions. Otherwise, it is obvious that Islam has got nothing to do with nationalistic and linguistic prejudices. Islam is not the religion of some particular community, nor has it been revealed to support any particular language and end up turning itself into the *deen* of a single community.

There is one more reason why the elders of the community have abhorred and refrained from the use of non-Arabic languages in religious and worldly matters. When we glance over the history of the 1st Century AH, we come to know that except the Arabs, the entire world was non-Muslim. This scenario had made Arabic culture synonymous with Islam and non-Arabic culture synonymous with disbelief. In order to completely sever the relations of newly reverted non-Arabs from their parent culture and to induct them into Islam, it had become necessary to mould them as per Arab culture and to transform their social life, language, attire, mannerisms and etiquettes. This is because internal transformation can never be completed unless the external form has also been transformed. If they had been left alone after having accepted Islam and they would have continued to remain a part of the pagan society with respect to their culture, language and etiquettes, then it is definite that these dispersed islands of Islam would have submerged in the sea of disbelief the moment they would have appeared on the horizon. This situation continued for many years. Later, when large communities of other nations had become Muslim, Islam no longer remained synonymous with Arab culture. Today, languages like Turkish, Persian and Urdu are no longer considered to be languages of pagan communities; they have come to be recognized as Muslim languages. Today, the Arabic attire and Arabic etiquette have no longer remained an indivisible part of Islam. The world does not recognize Islam through them any longer. The clothes Muslims usually wear in India is as much an 'Islamic dress' as is the Arab robe. In the same vein, every

form of attire and every form of social norm that would make a person stand apart and recognizable as a Muslim in any country would be synonymous with Islam in that particular country. Hence, it is no longer appropriate for our jurists to insist on Arabic today as the jurists of the 1st Century did in a completely different scenario. In our view, it is a fundamental mistake of the latter jurists that they do not pay any attention to the times and circumstances of the former ones and blindly follow their opinions.

Second argument

Another argument that is presented to vouch for the Arabic sermon is that the Book of God and all Islamic injunctions are in Arabic, and it is incumbent upon every Muslim to understand this language. It is their fault if they ignore learning it and are inept at understanding it. Why should the language of the sermon be changed for the sake of such people?

We agree that it is very important for Muslims to be familiar with the Arabic language. They cannot properly understand their religion if they are unable to understand it. We also concede that a major factor behind the spread of ignorance among Muslims is that the principal sources of Islamic knowledge are beyond their reach. We have repeatedly emphasized upon this need and it is our firm opinion that Arabic should be included as a compulsory subject in the educational curriculum of Muslim students. But there is a vast difference between 'is' and 'should be'. Try your best to deliver what 'should be' delivered. But do not look away from what actually 'is'. Your state is such that leave alone Arabic, even the basic course of Islam is not compulsory for Muslim students, while your stance is such that 'We are not concerned with the Muslims' lack of knowledge of Arabic, we would deliver the sermon in Arabic come what may'! Do you assume that your insistence upon the Arabic sermon would compel the

Muslim masses to learn Arabic for the mere sake of understanding the Arabic sermon?

Third argument

The third argument that is put forth against the use of non-Arabic languages in sermons is comparatively stronger: that there is a danger of factions getting created in Islam giving rise to separate linguistic communities therein. The objective of the Friday prayers is to unite Muslims across communities overriding the difference in their languages, races and nationalities. If the sermons are delivered in non-Arabic languages, there would be separate Friday prayers for different linguistic communities, disrupting this much sought after unity.

This danger is not at all unfounded. But it is not very difficult to solve either. What should be done is that the sermon should be bilingual. The first part should be in Arabic, which can be specifically reserved to praise and glorify God, to send blessings upon the Prophet ﷺ and his family and companions and to recite certain ayaat of the Qur'an. The second part, in which the teachings and injunctions of Islam are to be conveyed and people need to be admonished in accordance with the prevailing concerns of society should be in a language that is easily understood by all or most of those present. One should prefer a language that is commonly understood by all Muslims in that part of the world. In India, for instance, instead of resorting to the local and regional languages, one should deliver the sermon in Urdu because it is widely understood by Muslims of all Indian states. However, in those places where the Urdu-speaking population is sparse, the sermon can be delivered in the regional language.

Arabic should nevertheless be the language of choice for the sermon in those places that witness an international gathering of Muslims.

Practical hurdles

Whatever we have discussed till now pertains only to the juristic aspect of this issue. What I mean is that we cannot see any legal obstacle in delivering the sermon in a non-Arabic language, and those who condemn it as impermissible or detestable or being against the Sunnah are grossly mistaken. However, there is one more aspect to this issue; one that is not related to the legal perspective, but to its practical hurdles and difficulties.

The basis on which it has been suggested that the sermon should be delivered in a commonly understood language is that the masses might benefit from it. This means that the primary object is not to understand it, but to benefit from it. But if it causes more harm than benefit, then every sane man would agree that it should better not be understood in the first place. Now let us make an honest appraisal of our community....

The standards of your Imam have stooped to ridiculously low levels. The post that was most crucial in the collective lives of the community has become the most unimportant of all. The post for which we have been commanded to select the best of candidates is being filled with the worst of men. The idea of an Imam in the minds of Muslims today is that of a person who is good for nothing in the outside world. A namesake *mullah* is appointed on a monthly salary of five to ten rupees and provided with two square meals a day. This is how the requirements of a masjid are considered met. The result of degrading the post of the Imam to such a level is that our masajid (which used to once groom our youth to touch the skies) are being handled by such men who have absolutely no knowledge, vision, courage or strength of character. Do you expect such people to guide you in your worldly and religious affairs through their Urdu sermons?

If you wish to forsake these people and appoint another class of people for the Friday prayers, then you would have

no option but to seek the services of our religious scholars. But save a handful of religious scholars, the state of the majority of people belonging to this class is too embarrassing for me to reveal. If you were to offer them a free rein to deliver the sermon of their choice, believe me, there would be chaos and commotion in the masjid every other Friday. This is because each of these 'scholars' has his own idea of Islam, about which they are so possessive and rigid that they consider giving space to another's opinion nothing less than a grave sin. Moreover, their tone and tenor is such that they can never deliver a speech without offending someone or the other. The campus from which they receive their education and the environment in which they spend their lives have no room for any discussion on the important aspects of *deen* or the problems facing the community. All their interests have narrowed down to a few petty points of mutual dissention. Hence, whenever given an opportunity to speak, it is natural for them to speak about the same petty issues. As a consequence, the sanctity of the masjid would be desecrated with swear words and violence, and finally, the followers of each such sect would start establishing their own Friday prayers.

This would be the state of those who have a religious bend of mind. As for our 'modern educated class' who does not give two hoots about this religious debate, it would find itself sinking in another problem. Every Friday, these people would have to listen to a host of fabricated and lame narrations, baseless stories and vulgar interpretations of Islamic injunctions from the Prophet's pulpit... things that are sufficient to make it difficult for even mature Muslims to remain in the fold of Islam, let alone encourage non-Muslims to accept the Islamic faith.

In addition to these religious skirmishes, Muslims these days have involved themselves in political skirmishes as well. Wherever 'mister-type *maulvis*' or '*maulvi*-type misters' are allowed to deliver the sermon, they would

exploit this opportunity to canvass for their own political party and demean, humiliate and curse the party they are opposed to. This is yet another source of discord that would eventually make it impossible for Muslims to even offer their prayers together. The masajid would come to witness scenes that polling stations are identified with, and a day would come when our masajid would be divided on political lines, with each person offering his prayers in the masjid that supports his political leaning.

You would have to come with a solution to these problems before you proceed with delivering the sermon in a non-Arabic language. One solution that I can think of is that the religious scholars of an unbiased, non-partisan organization should take the onus of preparing drafts for the Friday sermon. These sermons, while staying clear of those unimportant issues that have the potential to create discord, should invigorate the listeners with the true spirit of Islam. Next, influential and right-minded people from all over India should try to see to it that only those sermons that are prepared by this central organization get delivered in all masajid. If we are able to establish such an organization (which seems quite implausible as of today), then I see no harm in having the sermon delivered in a non-Arabic language. However, unless and until we come with such an organization, it would be far too prudent and expedient to continue with the traditional Arabic sermons which are at least not harmful if not too useful. At the same time, if one is fortunate enough to find an appropriate speaker, he should not shy away from benefiting from his services.

Tarjumanul Qur'an
(Safar-Rabiul Awwal 1356 AH/
March-April 1937 CE)

More on the Language of the Sermon....

A person from the Deccan state of Hyderabad's Nizamabad city writes:

"Your elucidation regarding the issue of language of the Friday sermon from the rational point of view as well as from the sources referred, and the inferences that you have drawn from the current situation do not leave any scope for disagreement. It is true that while teaching the Arabic language is a far off matter, Muslims have not been able to make even basic religious studies compulsory in their curriculum. Making Arabic sermons compulsory in such a scenario is an exercise in futility. In case of an emergency, even eating the forbidden becomes permissible. However, the arguments that you have presented and the reasons you have laid down to call the practice of the Prophet ﷺ and his companions their personal, habitual act instead of regarding it as an Islamic necessity and clause do not appeal to my heart.

There is no doubt about the fact that Islam has got nothing to do with nationalistic and linguistic prejudices. On the contrary, its raison d'être is to purge society of all forms of nationalistic, racial and linguistic discriminations and to establish a single nation instead of the numerous nations we see today. This nationality was called Islam (إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِندَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ "*Indeed the deen in the sight of Allah is Islam...*" Surah Aal'Imran ayat 19) and the nation was called Muslim (سَمَّاكُمُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ *He has named you 'Muslims'*... Surah alHajj ayat 78). Just as all the different nations of the world have always had a distinct national language, it is but

natural that this nation 'Muslim' should also have a national language.

The consequences that naturally and compulsorily occur do not need any legislation to achieve them. A doctor would never command us to get rid of the disease. Instead, he would prescribe ways and means which lead to health. A dominating community does not issue commands to change the language of the community it dominates; rather it is the latter that naturally comes to adopt the language of the dominating community. Why would the Creator of nature and His messenger, then, issue a command that would anyway have been achieved by the natural scheme of things?

The basic purpose of revealing the Qur'an was to establish the system of Islam in all parts of the world. Arabic is its state language. The language of its administrators and subjects should necessarily be the same. Kindly consider those ayaat of the Qur'an that speak of it being revealed in the Arabic language:

إِنَّا أَنزَلْنَٰهُ قُرْءَٰنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٢﴾

"Indeed We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an that you might understand". [Surah Yusuf ayat 2]

فَإِنَّمَا يَسَّرْنَٰهُ بِلِسَانِكَ لِتُبَشِّرَ بِهِ ٱلْمُتَّقِينَ وَتُنذِرَ بِهِۦ قَوْمًا لُّدًّا ﴿٩٧﴾

"So, (O Muhammad), We have only made it (the Qur'an) easy in your tongue that you might give glad tidings thereby to the righteous and warn thereby a hostile people." [Surah Maryam ayat 97]

وَكَذَٰلِكَ أَنزَلْنَٰهُ قُرْءَانًا عَرَبِيًّا

"And thus We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an" [Surah TaHa ayat 113]

قُرْءَانًا عَرَبِيًّا غَيْرَ ذِى عِوَجٍ لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾

"It is an Arabic Qur'an without any deviance." [Surah azZumar ayat 28]

قُرْاٰنًا عَرَبِيًّا لِّقَوْمٍ يَّعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٣﴾

"An Arabic Qur'an for a people for a people who know" *[Surah Fussilat ayat 3]*

If all that these ayaat convey is that the Prophet ﷺ was Arab and that the call of Islam was initially given to Arabs and that is why this Qur'an has been revealed in the Arabic language, then what was so 'wise' about it that the 'Wise One' has conveyed to us? This was understood by itself. If the Qur'an and the Prophet ﷺ were not sent for the Arabs alone, then there is no logic in assuming that only these ayaat were addressed to the Arabs and the rest of the Qur'an has been addressed to all mankind. If the Qur'an has been revealed in Arabic to cater to its primary addressees, then it should also be accepted that most of the injunctions contained therein also pertain to the social and regional issues of the Arabs alone, as is claimed by some perverted minds. The Qur'an is a تَنْزِيْلٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ﴿٨٠﴾ *"revelation from the Lord of the Worlds"* [Surah alWaqiah ayat 80] and مِنَ اللّٰهِ الْعَزِيْزِ الْحَكِيْمِ *"from Allah, the Exalted in Might, the Wise"* [Surah azZumar ayat 1], the one that is a هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ *"guidance to all mankind"* [Surah alBaqarah ayat 185], a ذِكْرٌ لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ *"reminder to all the worlds"* [Surah atTakweer ayat 27] and is being referred to as a straight path for all mankind. Then what was the logic behind revealing the 'Arabic Qur'an' for all mankind when there are hundreds of languages being spoken among them? God has exalted His messenger by saying وَرَفَعْنَا لَكَ ذِكْرَكَ *'and We have exalted for you your esteem'* [Surah al Inshirah ayat 4] and called him a رَحْمَةً لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ *'mercy to the worlds'* [Surah alAnbiyah ayat 107] and sent him as a 'teacher of the Book and wisdom' for the guidance of all mankind. Was it not possible for God to teach His exalted Prophet all the spoken languages if it was indeed the intention of the 'Wisest of all' that Islam should

not 'end up turning itself into the *deen* of a single community'?

If the Prophet's act of delivering the sermon in Arabic was not an Islamic legal requirement, then does revealing an Arabic Qur'an for non-Arabic speaking populations and selecting only those people for its propagation who were familiar with the Arabic language not come in the way of achieving the purpose for which it was revealed?

There is no doubt about the fact that the addressees of the Prophet ﷺ were Arabs, with hardly any person not knowing Arabic ever having attended the Prophet's gatherings. But why had the Prophet sent invitations to the Roman emperor and the King of Persia in Arabic? If the *deen* does not require that it should be propagated only in one particular language, then why did the Prophet ﷺ have them written in Arabic? No act of the 'teacher of the Book and wisdom' that related to his prophetic office could ever be devoid of wisdom.

The fact that an Arabic Qur'an has been revealed for the entire mankind clearly reveals the intent that the people of the nation that would arise as a result of accepting this *deen* should have a common language. This would bring them together instead of making them drift apart. This is not against nature, but the very requirement of nature. Once the *deen* of Islam is established, all these objectives would naturally be achieved. Take any community- all its members would have the same language. India, being a multi-lingual country, is struggling to come up with a national language to achieve national integration. Islam strives to develop fraternity among its followers. Differences in language would keep alive their mutual differences and create roadblocks in the path of universal brotherhood. If people speaking English, Hindi, Arabic, Turkish, Japanese and Chinese assemble together at a place, leave alone conversing with each other, they would not be able to even greet each other in the Islamic manner.

At one place you have written that 'the protection of the true spirit of Islam was hinged upon the safeguard of the Arabic language'. Then you say that it was this Islamic spirit that deepened the Arab prejudices of the likes of Caliph Umar and Caliph Ali (God be pleased with them both)! Sir, your write-up is in serious need of a review! You are speaking about those personalities who have no parallel in history. They were equipped with the light of guidance and were a personification of true knowledge and virtue. Imbued with these qualities, they had rolled up their sleeves to uproot all forms of misguided prejudices. Did Islam kindle in them the same prejudices? What an amazing thing to say! The truth is that since the protection of the true spirit of Islam was hinged upon the safeguard of the Arabic language, it was the need of Islam and not of Arabism that Arabic was required to be safeguarded.

If your line of argument is taken to be true, then the objections that are raised against the act of jihad would also find vindication. It could be said that since the Arabs were already consumed with bloodshed and violence, Islam aroused their passions even more (by means of prescribing jihad). In other words, all the sacrifices and valour exhibited by these honorable souls were not a result of their religious fervour, but simply their natural/habitual act. What is more difficult than differentiating between a natural/habitual act and an Islamic legal act is to present an opinion about an act which is both- natural/habitual and an Islamic requirement at one and the same time.

If the blessed companions and the righteous elders have not delivered the sermon in a non-Arabic language, or have not called upon the non-Arabs to embrace Islam (by making use of local languages), or have detested the use of non-Arabic languages even in daily conversation, then this was not because it was a natural/habitual thing to do or because they were influenced by their times and surroundings; rather, it was because وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِلَّهِ *"those who believe are stronger in love for Allah"* [Surah alBaqarah

ayat 165]. Islam was in their veins. Their mind, body and souls had surrendered before the will of God. They were loyal subjects of the divine establishment. Just as this establishment was dearer to them than anything this world could offer, so also was the language of this establishment (which was not the language of the Arabs, but that of the divine establishment) was dearer to them than all other languages, and this, sir, is true human nature. Today, those who crave for power and those who have anglicized their souls have surrendered themselves to the English language, despite the fact that the British Emperor or the Viceroy have never asked them to change their language.

The motive behind eradicating linguistic prejudices is to make it clear that Arabs have no superiority over non-Arabs. These prejudices were very much relevant during pre-Islamic times. If a non-Arab were to embrace Islam, he would gain as much honour and status as an Arab. Muslims were instructed not to look down upon such a person if he is not familiar with Arabic. After getting assimilated into the Islamic community and embracing the *deen* of God, his language would on its own become Arabic, the state language, because members of the Muslim community are, in fact, subjects of the divine establishment.

A community that has a common set of beliefs and a common creed, a common purpose in life, a common goal, common teachings, ethics and norms should not have a common language! How astonishing is that! Just as the Kaaba belonged only to the Arabs before Islam but is now the common property of all Muslims, so also, the Arabic language belonged exclusively to the Arabs before Islam; but after Islam, this language remained not the language of the Arabs alone, but is the language of all Muslims around the world."

Reply

It seems that the respected reader has not had a principled approach towards the topic under consideration.

Had he adopted such an approach, his letter would not be riddled with so many mutually different ideas.

One aspect of the issue relates to jurisprudence- the legal implications therein. When analysed from this point of view, all that needs to be seen is whether delivering the sermon in Arabic is a legal requirement or not. To reach a proper conclusion in this matter, the following questions need to be answered:

- Can anything be cited from the Qur'an or the Sunnah/Hadith. to prove that the sermon should compulsorily be delivered in Arabic?
- If there is no such citation available and this command emanates only from the practice of the law-giver ﷺ, then does this practice of his come under the purview of 'Sunnah'?
- Has every act of the Prophet ﷺ been called a Sunnah in Islamic terminology, or has a distinction been made between his natural/habitual acts and the Islamic legal acts?
- If such a distinction has been made, then does the Prophet's practice of delivering the sermon in Arabic come under the definition of a natural/habitual act or an Islamic legal act?

The second aspect of the issue is more practical in nature. In order to reach a proper conclusion in this matter, the following points need to be considered:

- What is the objective of the sermon?
- Can we still benefit from the approach adopted by the Prophet ﷺ and the jurists of the first generation to achieve this objective?
- Is the objective more important in Islam or the means employed to achieve the objective?
- If the objective holds more importance and if the traditional means employed to achieve the same are

creating hurdles in its achievement in some particular situation that is beyond our control, then can we bring about any amendment in the traditional means while abiding by the principles of Islamic law?

- If we have been entitled to make such amendments then what should be the nature and extent of this amendment?

These are those questions in which the solution to this issue can be found. Had the reviewer kept these points in mind while discussing this issue, it would have been easier for us to understand his points of contention and points of concurrence. We could have then discussed the points of contention and attempted a proper conclusion. However, the approach he has adopted tells us that the points that can possibly be disagreed upon are not quite clear to him and he has instead got involved in some supplementary discussions. However, since he is mirroring the usual stance that is assumed by those who are against any amendment in the way the sermon is delivered, we have published his letter here and would try to clear those misconceptions which have confused him and those who share his ideas.

The line of argument that has been adopted by the writer is almost similar to the one adopted by those who had objected to the initiative of translating the Qur'an into other languages some while back. It is but obvious that if these arguments are accepted, translating the Qur'an would also be rendered impermissible, just as delivering the sermon in non-Arabic languages is considered impermissible. It would be declared that Arabic is the official language of Islam and it is incumbent upon those who follow Islam to gain familiarity with this language. If they do not do so, then it is their fault. The Qur'an would not be translated into their language or an 'unofficial language' to cater to their needs. In the same way, it would also be declared that Islamic injunctions, beliefs, moral teachings and other 'official' things would also be related

to them only in the official language. Nothing would be conveyed in any unofficial language, be it in the spoken or the written format.

Tell me, would you stand by a person who adopts this position? Probably not! Because you know too well that doing so in this age would deprive 80% of Muslims of all avenues of Islamic knowledge. It is for this reason that you not only consider it permissible but even necessary for the Qur'an to be translated into other languages, and it is on this basis that you not only tolerate but even appreciate the publication of 'official' content in 'unofficial languages' in the form of speeches and articles. If this is indeed so, then why are all these issues raised only when the language of the Friday sermon is being discussed? It is considered not only permissible but even beneficial if a person sitting in a masjid delivers a speech in a local language after the prayer or before the sermon. But if the same person delivers the same content from the steps of the pulpit in the form of a Friday sermon, it would be considered impermissible and an innovation at that! Now before you attribute these clearly incompatible actions to Islamic law, kindly introspect and see whether there is any un-Islamic intention hidden behind your stance.

It often so happens that people are so much engrossed in the love of the ancient that if an independent scholar dares to amendment the traditional method in view of the changing scenario and social requirements, they start opposing him merely because he has adopted a method that does not suit their inclination. But once this new method gains mass approval and it no longer remains alien to them, they not only start consider it permissible but also regard it as beneficial. When Shah Waliullah translated the Qur'an into the Persian language, he faced opposition for the same reasons. History has also witnessed a time when supplicating, delivering a speech and putting forth one's opinions on a religious issue in a non-Arabic language was a new thing to do and people used to oppose it. When the

Turkish government was planning to bring about reformations in its military structure in accordance with the modern practice of warfare and sanctioning the induction of modern weapons in its armament, there was a group that opposed this move very sternly. On all such occasions, the argument put forth was that it was a departure from tradition and an innovation in religion. But you would not find a single soul today who is opposed to these things. On the contrary, every person regards them as permissible today and even applauds them. If you ponder over the reason behind such objections, you would realize that they are the result of un-Islamic intentions working behind them. These people then try to vindicate their opposition by citing some Islamic clause or the other in support of their stand.

Whatever you have written about the status of Arabic in Islam is a blend of fact and fiction. You are absolutely right in saying that the Arabic language has a deep relation with Islam. The Qur'an has been revealed in Arabic. All the information we have regarding the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his blessed companions (God be pleased with them all) is in Arabic. A person can be a good Muslim only if he has a proper knowledge of Islam, and such knowledge cannot be attained without being familiar with the Arabic language. It is for this reason that religious scholars have always stressed upon the need to learn Arabic and it is for this very reason that even today, the Muslim intelligentsia considers it important to include Arabic as a compulsory second language in the school curriculum and that it should be taught to every Muslim student. All these points are correct, with no scope for dissent whatsoever. But as I have already written stated, and I reiterate, there is a vast difference between 'is' and 'should be'. Try your best to deliver what 'should be' delivered. But do not shy away from harmonizing your approach according to what actually 'is'. Religion and logic both require that the objective should be given precedence over the means

employed to achieve that objective. If there happens to be a method that is much better per se, but no longer applicable, then seek and adopt a method that is applicable today, even if it is not as good as the previous one. But if you keep insisting upon the method and in the bargain lose the real objective, then this is neither a sign of intelligence nor piety.

Now please reflect upon the actual objective of *deen*. Is it to propagate the Arabic language as an official and national language or to convey the teachings and injunctions of Islam to mankind? It is but obvious that the actual objective is the latter, not the former. If that is indeed the case, then you should ponder over the appropriate course of action, given that not even 2% of Muslims residing in non-Arab nations are familiar with the Arabic tongue and that we are today deprived of the power and authority that had once allowed the Muslims of the first generation to spread the Arabic language. Should we achieve the actual objective of *deen* by employing another method, or should we stick to the traditional method and forsake the intended objective?

The arguments that you have used to conclude that *deen* should be propagated in only one language are quite weak. The weakness of these arguments would certainly dawn upon you if you earnestly think over it. *Deen* is a universal truth. It has no special relation with any human language in particular. The primary objective before God is to convey the message of *deen* to all mankind. Just as He takes the services of a man to achieve this objective, so also He uses a language as a medium for the same purpose. He has, previously, made the use of people belonging to different communities and their languages as a medium to convey this very *deen*. Now, if He has employed the Arabic language and the Arabic community to convey the final edition of His *deen*, then this does not mean that Arabic has become its sole official language, and that it is unlawful or detestable to propagate *deen* in any other language. Had it

indeed been so, then the Prophet ﷺ would have certainly issued clear instructions not to use any language but Arabic for the propagation of Islam till the end of time. On the contrary, we have aHadith that tell us that the Prophet ﷺ had commanded certain companions to learn foreign tongues, and non-Arab companions like Salman, the Persian used to convey the message of *deen* to their compatriots in their own local languages.

Now let us take up the doubt regarding the Arabic letters sent to the Roman Caesar and the Persian Chosroes. The first thing that should be noted here is that those letters were sent by the Prophet ﷺ in his capacity as a head of state to another head of state. In such diplomatic conversations, using the language of the addressee instead of one's own is an insult to one's own country. The second reason for doing so is that even if the Prophet would have wished to address each head of state in his own language, it was practically impossible for him to do so at that time. There were very few companions who were familiar with foreign languages, and those who knew foreign languages did not have such a good command over them that they could attempt to write on the Prophet's behalf and come anywhere close to his literary skills. Moreover, the Prophet knew too well that the kings he is sending these letters to could easily find such people who would explain the contents of the letter to them.[1]

Thus, there were certain practical hurdles and expediencies that compelled the Prophet to opt for Arabic while sending letters inviting those kings to Islam. This can be compared to the dry ablution performed by the Prophet

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[1] It should be known that there were many Arab localities that were either within the Roman and Persian territories or were under the influence of these empires. The chiefs of the major tribes residing in these areas had access to the Roman and Persian courts. Similarly, Egypt and Abyssinia had healthy trade relations with the Arabs and there were quite a few blocks within these nations that spoke Arabic.

ﷺ in the absence of water and the prayer he ﷺ has offered in the sitting position when he was feeling too weak to stand up. It was well within the power of God to sprout springs of fresh water wherever the Prophet wanted to make his ablutions and keep the Prophet always fit and healthy, wasn't it? Hence, it is naïve to cite such examples and derive conclusions that Islam wants to limit the propagation of deen to the Arabic language and that those who are unfamiliar with this language should be allowed to die in ignorance.

You have misunderstood the word, 'prejudice' that I have used in relation to the contempt the companions and the elders harboured against non-Arabic languages and their insistence on adopting Arabism. You have assumed that I have accused them of adopting an undue chauvinism, when, in fact, I had something else in mind. Prejudice is not always unwarranted or misguided. There is one kind of prejudice which comes naturally to human beings and is not considered blameworthy. For instance, if an Indian were to visit China he would feel disconnected with that country's language, tradition, etiquette and all its social norms and would feel uncomfortable with his surroundings. He would never like his family to adopt Chinese culture. This is a natural form of reservation that is found among all people with respect to anything alien in their surrounding. The companions were, after all, human beings. This was one major factor that led them to detest foreign culture. What contributed to this detest was that all their contemporary foreigners were disbelievers. The companions used to consider it necessary for those foreigners who accepted Islam to adopt the Arab culture so that they might dissociate themselves from their parent cultures and get assimilated into Muslim society. The companions also despised that the Muslims (who all happened to be Arabs then) should speak and dress like foreigners in non-Arab lands because they were

apprehensive that these Muslims would then get absorbed in the majority culture of the disbelievers.

Thus, there were two factors that led to the stance adopted by the blessed companions with regards non-Arabic languages- one was natural and the other was the need of the hour. The first of these factors does not hold any legal value. Hence, it should not be cited as a conclusive argument. As for the second factor- it does not exist anymore. As of today, languages like Urdu, Persian, Turkish and Javanese are as much Islamic as Arabic, and there is no reason why anyone should hold them in contempt or detest them assuming it to be an Islamic necessity to do so.

Tarjumanul Qur'an
(Jamadil Akhir-Rajjab 1356 AH/
August-September 1937 CE)

Is it Necessary to Deliver the Sermon in a Local Language?

A person from Moradabad writes:

Whatever you have written about the language of the sermon can be summarized by saying that it is merely permissible to deliver the sermon in a non-Arabic language and that it can be delivered in the language that is understood by the audience. This means that it is not necessary to do so, because permissibility could variously mean that it is preferable, non-preferable, disliked and even detestable. It is for the same reason that you have presented 'Practical hurdles' towards the end of your paper and have expressed, in no uncertain terms, your preference for the prevalent practice and dislike towards proceeding with the sermon in languages other than Arabic. For, had you considered it necessary, you would have come up with solutions to overcome those difficulties instead of giving in to those hurdles, and regardless of its success or failure, you would have declared that it is necessary to deliver the sermon in the language of the audience concerned. This is because something that is necessary (*wajib*) cannot be discarded simply because of some expediency or hurdle coming in its way. However, something that is merely permissible can be discarded in the wake of some expediency or difficulty. While it is true that it is necessary to adopt all possible means by which the benefits can be acquired and the difficulties can be overcome, this does not mean that until and unless we are able to adopt these means we should forsake what is necessary and continue to waste an otherwise beneficial weekly gathering that has been prescribed by Islam just as we have been wasting it in the past.

It is obvious that the Friday sermon is at least 'necessary' (*wajib*). You also agree that the purpose of the sermon is not just the remembrance of God and connecting with Him, but also admonishing, conveying, teaching and preaching the injunctions of Islam. Now, if the sermon is necessary, then achieving its purpose also becomes necessary, and it is plain obvious that a major objective of the sermon cannot be achieved without adopting a language that can be easily understood by the audience. Then according to the rule that 'it is necessary to adopt those things that are required to perform a necessary act', adopting this should also be held necessary.

And if it is necessary to adopt a local language, then it cannot be discarded because of any expediency or difficulty. Instead, it is incumbent upon us to make efforts towards solving those difficulties that can be solved.

The biggest hurdle that you have expressed in the way of delivering the sermon in a non-Arabic language is the propagation of controversial ideas and the resultant eruption of disputes and clashes. But the solution that you have proposed to overcome this hurdle and achieve the objectives of the sermon is quite insufficient. You have yourself conceded that it is implausible. In my view, it would be somewhat aberrant on the part of today's religious scholars to pull this off. So this means that we would keep beating 'round the bush without achieving anything tangible.

Let us assume that a group of religious scholars does prepare sermons and it is duly circulated in all masajid. Even if these sermons have no contentious issue contained therein, you have yourself said that the people delivering these sermons 'have their own idea of Islam, about which they are so possessive and rigid that they consider giving space to another's opinion nothing less than a grave sin' and that 'their tone and tenor is such that they can never deliver a speech without offending someone or the other'. How do you then expect such people to deliver the sermon

prepared by a group of religious scholars without inserting their own ideas or speaking against anything that goes against their preconceived notions? For starters, it is not at all difficult for a seasoned orator to divert his speech in the direction of his choice. And this is all the more easier for a *maulvi*-orator to do. When a *maulvi* propagates his idea, he has the Qur'an to back him up. He uses the Qur'an to derive support for the praise he heaps as well as the venom he spews from the pulpit. In short, he uses Qur'anic ayaat to justify and vindicate every such word and deed that he insists upon or holds dear to whatever extent, even if his stand is absolutely against Islam. Is there anything that would restrain him?

Even if it is assumed that the speaker would stick to the prepared sermon and not add any salt and pepper to it, would this still not go against the actual objective of the sermon? One of the objectives of the sermon is to guide the devotees as per the current situation of their respective locality. It shouldn't be that a patient of tuberculosis is treated for cholera. In that case, if not entirely, it would be somewhat similar to the prevalent state of affairs. Only the language would have changed, the content remaining as dry as it is today. Nor would it suffice to have a set of sermons on various topics, giving the person concerned the liberty to choose the one that seems most appropriate. This is because each location and each situation has its own requirement that cannot be fulfilled by those sermons that are prepared keeping the general context in mind.

Even if all these points are ignored, these sermons would, in the very least, have standard sentences that are recited in every sermon. If nothing else, it would still have the declaration of faith, would it not? These *maulvis* are capable of misinterpreting even these innocuous statements and saying all that they wish in their garb. They would defend their ideas, counter others and build up the sermon on these lines.

I also couldn't understand the need to discourage sermons on conflicting and controversial issues. I do not deny the possibility of the hazards that have been written about, but should this topic be abandoned on the mere pretext of avoiding a possible hazard?

It is true that unless there is an express expedient need to delve upon such issues, people should refrain from getting them out of the closet. But when the need does arise, these issues should definitely be spoken about just as other social issues are.

It is obvious that in our times, most of the cases of chaos and dissention arise because of condemning polytheism and innovations in religion and discussing its fine points. However, this issue is so much crucial to the reformation of Muslims that it is imperative that it should be discussed; one should never neglect them under any condition. If we are to keep our Friday sermons deprived of issues like rectification of creed, the real concept of monotheism and prophethood, adoption of Sunnah and keeping away from innovations, condemning polytheism and explaining its various types, then I do not understand what possible topic is more relevant than these towards the reformation of fellow Muslims.

In my opinion, the only way out is that the part of the sermon that deals with the propagation of Islamic injunctions should necessarily be in the local language. The fallouts that one can be apprehensive of should be controlled by employing certain other means, like instructing the speaker not to unnecessarily indulge in the details of such issues. He may definitely speak on them if there is a valid reason to do so, but he should take care not to adopt an extremist attitude, but should instead soften his tone, explain the subject in clear, straightforward terms and refrain from hurting anyone's sentiments. This can be communicated to him orally or in writing.

After all, the speeches of such *maulvis* cause dissention even today. The steps that are taken to prevent any untoward incident in those gatherings can be taken here as well.

Another point that needs to be considered is that the effect of these dissentions has become so deep rooted in people's minds these days that, more often than not, a person of a certain ideology and creed does not even pray behind a person subscribing to another ideology and creed. The prayers and Friday sermons of each group are mutually different, their masajid are different. Every locality has a masjid that caters to the ideology of the majority population of that area. They are free to -and they indeed do- deliver any speech they want in their respective masajid in the midst of their co-ideologues. No one is allowed to oppose them, and there is hardly anyone who would.

Whatever I have said pertains to those two groups that are commonly referred to as Deobandi and Barelvi, Wahabi and Biddati. This is because these are the two major groups in India, and to the best of my knowledge, all the skirmishes that take place involve members of these two groups only. There must rarely have been an instance where a third group is involved. Nevertheless, going by their numbers, these are the only two groups worth mentioning. And if this is my opinion regarding the majority, then it should all the more be pronounced in case of the minority factions.

As for the fear of fabricated and lame narrations getting delivered, it can be allayed if the influential people of each locality see to it that ignorant and out-on-rent Imams are not appointed for the Friday prayers. As much as possible, this task should be allotted to right-minded and qualified religious scholars. If he is not a religious scholar, then a religious scholar should at least endorse him and his speech as reliable.

Finally, a circular should be penned down and published for all such religious scholars that would clearly elucidate the ways and means to guard against these hazards. For example, 'Do not narrate any Hadith or historical incident without proper reference' or a list of those books should be published that can safely be referred, with the conditions that render them authentic for reference, along with those books that have fabricated narrations and hence should never be referred. These and many such things can be included in that circular so as to caution and educate the people who would deliver the Friday sermon. In my opinion, these steps can help us overcome a major aspect of the hazards associated with delivering the sermon in the local language.

This is from my own self, it is only God who possesses true knowledge, He is the Knowledgeable, the Aware.

Reply

This is quite fascinating a predicament. There is one group that is trying to prove that delivering the sermon in a non-Arabic language is outright detestable (*makrooh tahreemi*), which means that a person doing so would be a sinner. Another group is trying to prove that it is necessary (*wajib*) to deliver the sermon in a local language, which means that a person not doing so would be a sinner. This, despite the fact that neither group has any sound Islamic argument to prove that it is detestable or necessary! One should clearly understand a rule in this regard that only those things are obligatory (*farz*), necessary (*wajib*), forbidden (*haram*) or impermissible in Islam that have been granted such a status by none other than God and His messenger ﷺ and we have an explicit ruling in this regard in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The commission or omission of only such things can make a man a sinner. As for those rulings that we derive and deduce from the words and deeds of God and His messenger ﷺ, it is absolutely wrong

to declare them as obligatory, necessary, forbidden or impermissible, and it is equally wrong to state that the person would be rewarded or punished for having performed those deeds. This is because man has no right whatsoever to declare something as obligatory, necessary, forbidden or impermissible on any other man, and it is only God- and not man- who is authorized to issue rewards and punishments.

وَلَا تَقُولُوا لِمَا تَصِفُ أَلْسِنَتُكُمُ الْكَذِبَ هَٰذَا حَلَالٌ وَهَٰذَا حَرَامٌ لِّتَفْتَرُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ ۚ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَفْتَرُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ لَا يُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١١٦﴾

"And do not say about what your tongues assert of untruth, 'This is lawful and this is unlawful', to invent falsehood about Allah. Indeed those who invent falsehood about Allah will not succeed." [anNahl ayat 116]

Even the most accomplished religious scholar and jurist does not have any right to say more than 'What I understand from the Qur'an and the Sunnah is that….', 'In my opinion, it is alright to do so-and-so' or that 'It is preferable to do so-and-so' or that 'In my opinion, such an act should not be done' or that 'It is not preferable to do so'. Even in this case, there is always a scope for dissent, because the understanding of one person might not be in complete accordance with that of another person. But this difference in opinion would not relate to the injunctions of Islamic law, but to man's own derivations and deductions. Such a healthy difference of opinion would not lead to the discord that arises when people start declaring a particular act to be obligatory or forbidden on the basis of their own readings and then go on to pronounce each other guilty of sin and accuse them of being misguided.

After having understood this principle, let us now focus on the issue of the language of the Friday sermon. The Qur'an and the Sunnah are silent on the desired language in which it should be delivered; we do not come across any language that has been termed necessary or

detestable for the sermon. Similarly, the Qur'an and the Sunnah have not elaborated upon the purpose for which the sermon was attached to the Friday prayers. None of the various things that are stated in this regard by the various religious scholars across the spectrum owe their source to the explicit commands of the Qur'an or the Sunnah. Rather, they have derived different rulings on the basis of their own understanding in light of the deeds and actions of the Prophet ﷺ. It is quite possible that the understanding of one of these groups is correct, and it is equally possible that understanding of the other group is correct. Both have a right to present their respective arguments. But no one has the right to declare the ruling he has derived from his own understanding as 'necessary' and call the person who does not act accordingly a 'sinner', or declare something as 'forbidden' and accuse a person of committing a sin if he happens to do so. People are free to accept and abide by the ruling of the jurist whose arguments seem more appealing and whose opinion seems more satisfactory to them. The fact that the Qur'an and the Sunnah have maintained silence over this issue is proof enough that Islam has allowed the people to decide upon it. There is no harm if different people adopt a different approach. The vast majority would eventually accept the way of that jurist who has stronger arguments and whose opinion appeals to the collective conscience of Muslims, thereby gradually reducing the sphere of contrasting practices.

The line of approach that has been adopted by the gentleman to conclude that it is necessary to deliver the Friday sermon in a local language is akin to someone saying that the primary objective of prayer is to turn towards God, and this cannot be achieved unless we humbly concentrate in our prayers, and since it is obligatory to adopt those things that are required to perform an obligatory act, being humble and attentive in the prayers should also be obligatory! While this line of argument might hold true from the logical premise, it is not at all true

as far as Islamic law is concerned. This is because such a person is trying to burden the Muslims with an act that God has not made obligatory upon them. As I have said earlier, only those things are obligatory and forbidden as per Islamic law that have been declared obligatory and forbidden by God. We have no right to add to the list of obligatory and forbidden acts by resorting to logic. The past communities had committed the same mistake. They had made many such things obligatory upon themselves that God had not obliged them with. These were the very yokes that the Messenger ﷺ was sent to liberate them from.

وَيَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ إِصْرَهُمْ وَالْأَغْلَٰلَ الَّتِي كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ

"...and (he) relieves them of their burden and the shackles that were upon them...."[Surah alA'araf ayat 157]

The people are neither obliged to accept and abide by the opinion that I have presented regarding the language of the Friday sermon nor the counter-opinion that is presented by certain religious scholars. In the same way, there is no sin on them if they do not abide by any of these opinions. If someone were to present his opinion in the form of a command, then it would be his own mistake.

The person writing the letter has not paid due attention to the things that I have sought to rectify before proceeding with a vernacular sermon. This has led to the doubts that he has expressed in his letter. The fact remains that none of the injunctions of Islam have retained their original form after the collapse of the Islamic establishment. The Friday assembly and the sermon were among the most important components of the Islamic establishment. There was a grand collective objective involved. To achieve this objective, the Friday assembly and sermon had been incorporated in a judicious proportion - along with other contributing elements- into a greater scheme. But we have now been deprived of that glorious establishment. The components of this system have worn off, disconnected with each other and with the society at large. Now, even

that grand collective objective, for the sake of which we had these components, has been reduced to embers. This morbid condition can be truly rectified only if that establishment is resuscitated and brought back to life and its various components are collected and reassembled like the parts of a machine so that its movement would bring about the results that are expected of it. In case this is not possible, then the least that should be done is to forge unity among the Muslims, cultivate in them a habit of executing their community tasks under a common system (even if on a small scale), and to use this unity to defeat the evils that arise out of the incongruous acts of irresponsible individuals. And if even this is not possible, then better not harp on about any social reformation. Allow the status quo to be maintained and let things be as they are. I say this because if every person insists and acts upon his own idea of reform, there would be a sea of reformists who would act against each other, and this would lead to nothing but an escalation of discord instead of bringing about any reform whatsoever.

In an Islamic establishment, the status of the person delivering the Friday sermon is not merely that of a speaker. Rather, he is the man who is in charge of the affairs of the Muslim community of his area, who is invested with the responsibility of looking after them, protecting their community lives from various evils and corruptions and making them abide by the common national policy. Responsibility is a teacher in itself. A person who has been burdened with it learns to appreciate its value. On the contrary, an irresponsible person who is neither related to any Islamic establishment, nor is he accountable before anyone, who has no idea how his sermon affects the collective life of the community or whether or not it does have any effect at all cannot do any justice to the Friday sermon. It is very difficult for such a person to understand the needs and requirements of the community. What are the factors that would contribute to its development? Which are those weaknesses that need to

be rectified first? What are those teachings and injunctions that need to be imparted and preached on a priority basis? Which task should he take up and how should it be carried out to achieve optimal results? Since the Imams we have appointed for the Friday sermon do not hold any public office, they are incapable of discharging their intended role. Even if the Imam happens to be a religious scholar, his status would be confined to that of an orator. All his teachings and admonishments would be limited to his personal authority. This would not lead to any substantial communal benefit; rather, their irresponsible comments would have an adverse effect on whatever little communal unity we see in our midst.

If the resurrection of the Islamic establishment is not feasible right now- as is quite apparent- then whatever I have proposed ought to be taken as the last resort. A group of religious scholars who hold some position of authority in society should be selected to prepare the Friday sermons. These sermons should present Islamic principles in a non-confrontational manner, make Muslims realize that they are but one community, admonish them on matters related to public immorality and those practices that are unanimously disdained as being against the teachings of Islam, and elaborate upon those commands that find acceptance among all our sects and denominations. This is the least that can be done to achieve the objectives of these Friday gatherings. We should strive to put an end to the deplorable practice of having separate Friday prayers for each sect and create an environment, an ambiance where it is possible for Muslims of most – if not all – sects to come together, sit together. Having separate Friday prayers is nothing less than a catastrophe! We need to contain this trend instead of facilitating the spread of this epidemic. If the speakers wish to present their point of view and insist on propagating their sectarian ideas, they should seek a platform other than the masjid to do so. Masajid have been erected to bring people closer, not to tear them apart. Relegating them to the status

of *masjidan ziraaran*[1] is an abominable act which cannot be tolerated at any cost.

(Jamadil Akhir- Rajab 1356 AH/ August-September 1937 CE)

[1] Referring to a masjid that has been erected for the sole purpose of creating harm and dissention among the community… Surah atTaubah ayat 107… Translator.

Use of Loudspeakers for Prayers

An educated person from Punjab has sought the Islamic ruling regarding the use of loudspeakers during prayers. He writes:

> *"The organizers of the Eid ground here had set up a loudspeaker for Eid-ul-Fitr prayers. After the prayers were offered, the local religious scholars raised their voices against this act. They even procured edicts from other areas and began telling the people that their prayers stood invalidated. Now the local population is distressed and the organizers of the Eid ground are afraid of putting up the loudspeakers for the upcoming Eid prayers, lest the public revolts against them and the religious scholars issue a verdict of apostasy against them.*

The benefit of using the loudspeaker last time around was that the prayer leader's voice could be clearly heard by all the attendees and there was sense of discipline maintained throughout the prayers. Hitherto, there used to be a lot of chaos and indiscipline, with so much confusion prevailing among the rows that we could find some people bowing and some others prostrating at the same given time.

When the local scholars were asked why they were opposed to the use of loudspeakers, they offered the following reasons:

a) Loudspeakers are instruments of amusement and diversion.

b) According to the Hanafi school of jurisprudence, if a person offering prayers behind a prayer leader responds to the voice of anyone other than that imam, his prayer becomes invalid.

However, we are not convinced by these arguments. The first point is not a reason, but a baseless claim. The second point makes us believe that these gentlemen are totally unaware of the mechanism of a loudspeaker. The voice emanating from a loudspeaker cannot be termed as not being that of the prayer leader. Such silly and stupid arguments presented by these scholars are not going down well with the educated class. It seems that our religious leaders wish to instigate and compel the Muslim youth of India to revolt against them just as Ataturk and Raza Shah were compelled to revolt against their religious leaders. But does not such a reaction hold the danger of distancing us from Islam in the same way as these two leaders who have gone astray?

We seek your guidance in this regard, having complete faith in your insight and understanding. If you consider the use of loudspeakers as valid in such large congregations, then kindly equip us with the necessary arguments to support this view so that we might quell the concerns of our respectable religious scholars. Conversely, if you feel that the use of loudspeakers is not appropriate for some reason, please let us know why it should not be used so that the educated youth can be convinced of the same."

This grievance has been reproduced in its entirety so that our religious leaders might understand the contemporary bend of mind and prevalent tendencies. We want them to reflect upon the kind of religious guidance required in the age they live in and the consequences of adopting ways reminiscent of the Middle Ages. The same situation was witnessed in Hyderabad a couple of years back. A loudspeaker was put up for the Eid prayers and the people could offer their prayers very comfortably. Everyone was happy with it… everyone but the religious scholars, who raised the flag of protest. After a few discussions, it was eventually ruled that it was impermissible to use this instrument for prayers. I happened to be in Hyderabad at that time. I was told about

the adverse effect this ruling had had on the educated class of the city and the kind of views that were being expressed against the religious scholars.

Let me make it clear that I do not belong to the category of those people who want to make Islamic injunctions subservient to the wishes of the 'educated class' under the false presumption that this is what enlightenment really is. I would not be wrong if I claim that I am in no way lagging behind even the most orthodox and fundamentalist scholar in waging a *jihad* against the irreligious views of this class. But I am also sternly against our religious scholars ignoring the tendencies and inclinations of the present hour and completely forgetting the fact that they are not living in the age when Hidayah and *Badae* were penned down, but in an age of modern scientific inventions and fast-paced cultural revolutions. In this age, it is but natural for new issues to crop up everyday; and the consequences of tackling these issues in the light of *Hidayah* and *Badae* are nothing other than the concerns expressed by the young questioner in his letter. Our young generation is getting strongly influenced by the current trends. It is not at all possible for a community spread across every corner of the world in numbers exceeding millions to be untouched by the issues and scenarios that are being created by this ever-changing world. Our religious scholars need to counter the un-Islamic tendencies that are developing in this young generation with arguments strong enough to convince them. Sixth Century logic would be of no use today. Islamic scholars must inculcate within themselves the spirit of deliberation and adopt broad-mindedness in order to guide these youth if they really want them to walk along the path of Islam in this modern social life. The only outcome of creating hurdles in their path by citing edicts and references from books as old as Alamgiri and Tatarkhani would be that these people would forsake the Qur'an and Hadith as

well, and choose any deviant path that would appeal to them, just like the Turks and Iranians have.

Reply

The issue under discussion can be solved in a few sentences. But before that, I consider it necessary to enumerate a few principles that would help you in understanding the Islamic stand in other similar issues as well....

1. First and foremost, it should be understood that clear guidelines concerning non-essential/tertiary things can be obtained only in those matters which were experienced during the lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ. As for those matters that came up after the Prophet, we cannot find any explicit injunction regarding them in Islamic law. Rulings concerning such matters can be derived only by employing the standard principles of deduction and taking into consideration the Islamic law in its entirety. All the rulings concerning such matters that the Prophet's companions, their followers and the jurists have come up with during their respective eras have been derived from these principles, and not obtained directly from the Qur'an or Hadith. Today if we come across a matter that had not existed during the age of the companions or their followers or the early jurists, or some instrument is invented which was not present in that age then there is no point in looking for rulings concerning them in the works of those elders- it would be an exercise in futility and an inadvisable one at that. We would also have to resort to the principles and general guidelines of Islamic law to solve such matters, as was the practice of the Prophet's companions, their followers and the respectable jurists.
2. A newly invented thing cannot be declared *makrooh* (detestable) or *haraam* (prohibited) on the mere basis that it was not present during the time of the Prophet ﷺ

or his companions or the jurists. It had never been God's intention that man's ability to invent new things should get exhausted after a certain period, or that the process of discovery and research into new means and the pursuit for modern modes of utilization of available resources should be allowed till a specific age and then prohibited thereafter. Those who tend to interpret *Sunnah* (tradition) and *Bidah* (innovation) on these lines are meeting out the worst form of injustice on Islam and Muslims by providing vindication to the allegations of those enemies of Islam who contend that Islam is not a timeless religion, but one that had come for a specific period in history and that following it in today's age shuts the doors of progress and development of human culture and civilization.

3. The actual objective of gradually legislating laws was to teach man the principles by which he would be able to use the available natural resources properly instead of misusing them, and that he might harness them in the pursuit of true success and valid gains rather than waste them after harmful motives. We have not just been given a theoretical knowledge of these principles via the Qur'an and the Hadith literature; they have been practically demonstrated to us. The Islamic method of utilizing of all those resources that were subject to man's command during the time of the Prophet ﷺ have been shown to us, that we might know how and for what purpose we are expected to utilize the resources that would come under our command in the future ages as well. The companions of the Prophet ﷺ and the esteemed jurists have understood the Islamic legal principles in this very spirit. They have made legal guidelines more clear to us by applying Islamic principles to those matters and advancements that came up with the development of civilization in their respective times. Now if we understand those principles, we would face no confusion or difficulty in

matters concerning new inventions and the utilization of those new resources that have recently been made subject to us; neither would we be skeptical, nor be defiant towards it. Rather, we would ponder over the principles of Islamic law and know for sure whether it can be used or not; and if it can be used then what is its preferred and despised method in the sight of God. The reason why this general trend of being skeptical of every new invention and creating hurdles in the path of development by showing defiance towards it has developed is that instead of trying to understand the principles and holistic approach of the Islamic law, our religious scholars have been getting engrossed in the details of jurisprudence and the supplementary issues discussed therein.

4. The rule of thumb that we obtain from the Qur'an and Hadith is that every thing is permissible by default, unless its impermissibility is proved. In other words, every thing should be considered pure, permissible and acceptable until we have evidence of it being impure or prohibited.

The Qur'an says:

هُوَ الَّذِىْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِى الْاَرْضِ جَمِيْعًا ۚ

"It is He who created for you all that is on the earth."
[Surah alBaqarah ayat 29]

وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الْاَرْضِ جَمِيْعًا مِّنْهُ

"And He has subjected to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth."
[Surah alJathiyah ayat 13]

It is clear from these two ayaat that everything that is present in the heavens and the earth is for human beings. Thus, man is entitled to utilize them and benefit from them. There is no need of obtaining permission for each and every thing separately. Unless there is an explicit command against the use or method of utilization of a particular

thing, all things would essentially be considered pure and permissible.

In a Hadith narrated by Salman, the Persian (God be pleased with him), the Prophet ﷺ says, "Permissible is the thing that God has declared permissible in His Book and prohibited is the thing that God has declared prohibited in His Book. As for those things that have not been mentioned, they are forgiven." [Abu Dawood]

5. The basis on which a particular thing can be declared as permissible or impermissible has been elucidated in the Qur'an.

يُحِلُّ لَهُمُ الطَّيِّبٰتِ وَيُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَبٰٓئِثَ

'(The messenger ﷺ) makes the clean (or beneficial) things lawful to them and prohibits all corrupt (or harmful) things.' [Surah alA'raf ayat 157]

This has been further explained in a Hadith as well.

لَا ضَرَرَ وَلَا ضِرَارَ فِي الْإِسْلَامِ۔

Neither does Islam expect one to harm oneself, nor does it desire that others be harmed.

Thus, in case there is no explicit command regarding the prohibition or impermissibility of any particular thing, it would be seen whether that thing is beneficial or harmful for mankind. If it is proved to be harmful, then it stands prohibited, and it would be permissible to use it if it is proved to be beneficial. Likewise, their mode of utilization would also be judged using the same criterion. The mode of utilization that leads to corruption would stand condemned and the one that leads to reform would be considered permissible.

6. We have also been given a standard benchmark to determine what is 'beneficial', 'harmful', 'corruption' and 'reform' by the Legislator Himself. We have not been left in the dark to decide for our own selves what is beneficial and what is harmful. Rather, we have been taught some principles to discern between them. One of

these principles is that those things that create obstacles in the performance of obligatory acts of *deen* are harmful. These should hence be avoided. On the contrary, those things that aid the performance of obligatory acts of *deen* are beneficial. The usage of such things is not only permissible, but recommended as well. For example, if binoculars are more helpful in sighting the first crescent as compared to the naked eye, then they should be considered preferable. Similarly, the use of clocks to determine the time of dawn for fasting during Ramazan or that of daily prayers should be considered preferable because they are more helpful in arriving at the correct time. As compared to camel-back, the use of motor cars and airplanes offers more convenience for Hajj pilgrims. Hence, their preference is also undeniable. In the context of preparations for *jihad*, since guns and missiles and warships and fighter jets are more useful than spears and swords and horses and elephants, the preference of the former over the latter can also not be overemphasized. If a person were to declare these things as prohibited or detestable on the mere pretext that these things were not being used during the early age of Islam, then such a person has no understanding of Islamic law whatsoever.

7. If something is invented to serve a purpose that has been prohibited by Islamic law, and there is no other application of that object, then its use is clearly prohibited. But if there's a thing that has both possible applications- positive as well as negative, and can be used as a tool to benefit mankind as well as to harm it, then such an object cannot be declared unlawful on the mere basis that it would probably be misused by miscreants to pursue impermissible acts. For instance, the gramophone is just a machine; it can be used for good as well as bad purposes. Hence, we cannot declare the gramophone as unlawful per se. Only those applications of the gramophone would come under the

purview of 'prohibited act' that tend to promote vulgarity and spread promiscuity.

When we ponder over the Islamic ruling regarding loudspeakers in the light of these principles, we safely conclude that the use of this instrument is very much recommended. It is one of those instruments that God has gifted us. It does nothing but amplify the sound that is naturally emitted. Since it has been invented quite recently, it would not be appropriate to seek its ruling from the *Sunnah* or the works of the respectable jurists. However, the criteria that Islamic law has given us to decide upon the permissibility or impermissibility of an object clearly lead us to conclude that the use of the loudspeaker is absolutely permissible. As for the way in which it can be used, it is unlawful to use it in the service of everything that is wrong or to spread the voice of profanity. It is, however, permissible to use it to amplify permissible sounds; and to use this creation of God to amplify His name is utmost preferable. How strange it is that the disbelievers use this servant subjected to man by God to proclaim the voice of evil, while we keep hesitating in using His servant to proclaim the voice of truth!

Now there's only one doubt that lingers: 'If a person offering prayers behind a leader (imam) follows the voice of someone else, his prayer gets invalidated. Hence, if a person bows and prostrates following the voice of the loudspeaker, his prayer does not remain valid'. But this doubt is unfounded and there are many reasons to it.

I. The sound emitted by a loudspeaker is not the voice of someone other than the imam, but that of the imam himself. The only difference is that it has been amplified by means of electricity. In this respect, it is almost similar to the voice of the imam that reverberates from the *mehraab*. (*Mehraab* is the concave structure facing the imam that serves to naturally amplify his voice… Translator)

II. There is a universal principle in Islamic law which says that the command of the follower is the same as that of the leader. It is on the basis of this rule that large prayer gatherings have certain people (*mukabbireen*) present in the congregation at regular intervals who repeat the signal of the leading imam. All the other people in hearing range of these people are required follow the signals of these people to bow and prostrate, rise and sit. This is because although these people are not the imam themselves, they are following the imam. Hence, the command of their voice is the same as the command of the imam's voice. Thus, even if it is accepted that the voice of the loudspeaker is not that of the imam, it can be likened to the *mukabbir*, in the sense that it is also following the imam. And if we give it a deep thought, we would realize that this device is two steps ahead of the *mukabbir* in following the imam. I say this because a *mukabbir* has the potential to use his own voice as well; and if there's a hypocrite in their ranks, he can even use his voice to give out conflicting signals and spoil the prayers of hundreds of worshippers. But a loudspeaker is such a faithful follower of the imam that it would not utter a single sound unless the imam does so. It would emit exactly the same sound that the imam renders from his mouth with no alteration whatsoever, to the point that it would even mimic the accent and pronunciation of the imam, and a person who is familiar with the voice of the imam would at once recognize this emitted voice to be of none other than the imam himself. How can the command of such a faithful follower be different from that of the leader? And if someone objects by saying that a *mukabbir* participates in the prayer, while a loudspeaker does not, then we would simply remind him of the 44th ayat of Surah Bani Israil which says that, *'And there is not a thing except that it exalts Allah by His praise, but you do not understand their way of exalting'*. According to the

Qur'an, when a believer offers prayers he never does it alone; rather, the entire universe offers prayers with him, even though he might remain oblivious of their prayers.

II. If a person refuses to accept the inference I have derived from this ayat and insists that the loudspeaker is not a participant of the prayer and thus dismisses the idea that it follows the imam, I have only this much to say that complying with the voice of someone other than the imam during a prayer does not invalidate the prayer. For instance:

- If a person is praying and someone greets him, then replying to his greeting using gestures would not invalidate his prayer. It is narrated in Tirmizi and Nisai that when the Prophet ﷺ was greeted while he was in his prayers, he would reply to the greeting using hand gestures.
- If a man is asked an urgent question while he is busy praying, then replying to that question using gestures would not invalidate his prayer. Thus, if a person engaged in prayer is offered a greeting and he responds by gesturing with his hand or the tilt of this head, or if he is informed of some news and he responds by nodding his head, or if he is asked how many cycles of prayer he has offered and he replies by signaling with his fingers, then in all these cases his prayers remain valid. [Fath alQadeer Vol 1, page 292]
- If a person is offering his prayers and someone calls him, then there is no harm if he utters aloud la ilaha illallah to signal to him that he is busy offering prayers; his prayers would remain valid. [Hidayah]
- Whenever the Prophet ﷺ used to hear the cry of a child during prayers, he used to shorten the prayers so that the accompanying mother might not feel

uneasy. [Bukhari and Muslim have many narrations in this regard]

- Lady Aishah (God be pleased with her) narrates that when the ailment of the Prophet ﷺ turned severe, he asked Abu Bakr (God be pleased with him) to lead the prayers. One day, the Prophet felt a bit better and proceeded to join the congregation. When Abu Bakr noticed that the Prophet had arrived at the masjid, he began to recede back. The Prophet, however, gestured him to continue. Abiding by the Prophet's instructions, Abu Bakr remained in his place and the Prophet sat to his left. [Bukhari and Muslim have both narrated this Hadith]
- Some people were offering their prayers in the Quba masjid when the announcement of the change in prayer direction fell on their ears, at which the worshippers immediately turned towards the direction of the Kaaba while still in their prayers. When this news reached the Prophet ﷺ, he not only affirmed the validity of their action but even appreciated this act of theirs. This has led the jurists to derive the ruling that if a person is praying facing the wrong direction in good faith because he is unaware of the right direction and someone were to inform him of the correct direction, then he should turn to the correct direction in the midst of his prayer itself. [Hidayah]

A number of such examples can be cited from the Hadith, from which it can be inferred that even if a person is informed of the imam's bowing or prostration or standing or sitting by an external reliable source and he responds accordingly, his prayer does not get adversely affected in the very least. What actually invalidates a prayer is any action performed by the worshipper that leads an onlooker to assume that that person is not engrossed in prayers, or the worshipper gets involved in such an

exchange that can be called a conversation or act of teaching or learning.

Accordingly, it has been mentioned in Mabsoot that:

"Every such act invalidates a prayer which convinces an onlooker that the person performing it is not in prayers. On the contrary, if an onlooker observes a person indulging in a particular act and still remains convinced that that person is performing his prayers, then such acts do not invalidate the concerned person's prayer." *[Vol 1, page 195]*

The 193rd page of the same book states that:

"If a person who is not participating in the congregational prayers (regardless of whether he is offering prayers alone or not offering prayers at all) were to correct the recitation of a person offering prayers, the prayer of latter would get invalidated. Similarly, his prayers would get invalidated even if he were to correct the former, because this comes under the purview of teaching and learning. When a person reciting the Qur'an seeks someone else's intervention during his recitation, what he is actually asking the listener is, 'What comes next? Please remind me', and what the person who intervenes is actually saying is, 'This comes next, recite it' (which means that this comes under the purview of conversation)."

There is a Hadith that says that the Prophet ﷺ was once leading the prayers, and Fara'a bin Rafae, who was praying behind him, sneezed and uttered in a loud voice, *Alhamdulillahi hamdan kaseeran tayyiban mubarakan fi hi mubarakan alaihi kama yuhibbu rabbuna wa yarza*. After the prayers, the Prophet asked the congregation, 'Who among you had uttered these words? By Him in whose hands lies my life, more than thirty angels were competing with each other to carry these words.'

[Tirmizi, Abu Dawood, Nisai]

In another Hadith, we are told that the Prophet ﷺ was once leading the prayers carrying a little girl[1] atop his shoulders. He would place her on the ground while bowing and again make her sit on his shoulders when he used to stand up. [Bukhari, Muslim]

It is on this basis that the jurists have arrived at a ruling that carrying a child during prayers does not invalidate one's prayer. [Alamgiri]

We also have a Hadith that says that the Prophet was once leading the prayers when a scorpion bit him. The Prophet at once stamped it with his shoes and killed it. He later explained that, 'Kill the snake and the scorpion, even if you are in the midst of offering prayers'. [Ahmad, Abu Dawood, Tirmizi, Nisai]

Since responding to the voice of a loudspeaker and bowing and prostrating accordingly is neither an act that would make an onlooker feel that the person concerned is not offering his prayers, nor does it come under the purview of teaching or learning or conversing, it naturally follows that it does not invalidate one's prayer. Moreover, when many such actions have been permitted during the prayer that have got nothing to do with the prayer per se, then how can an act as innocuous as responding to the call of the imam through a loudspeaker to bow and prostrate be assumed to invalidate one's prayer?

These are those arguments on the basis of which I not only hold the use of loudspeakers in prayers permissible but even preferable, and my sixth sense tells me that had this instrument been present during the age of the Prophet ﷺ he would definitely have used it for the azan, the sermon and the prayers, just as he had willingly consented to the Persian concept of digging a trench during the battle that bears the name of this strategy. Having said that, if a

[1] This little girl was none other than Umamah bint Abi alAas, the Prophet's granddaughter through his blessed daughter, Lady Zainab, with whom God be pleased.

religious scholar proves me wrong by citing sound Islamic arguments to support his claim (and not by merely taunting me of being an independent thinker), I would not hesitate to take back my opinion in his favour.

> *This is my own assumption, which might not necessarily be true. I am, after all, a human. I can make mistakes. My opinion can be right as well as wrong. Do consider my opinion. If it concurs with the Qur'an and the Sunnah, do accept it. If it does not, you are free to reject it.*

Tarjumanul Qur'an

[Jamadi ul Akhir 1357 AH/ August 1938 CE]

Upon reading this article, a gentleman sent us an edict issued by the late Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi (May God have mercy upon his soul) and has asked us to present our opinion on the same.

The edict is as follows

Question

> *"What do religious scholars have to say about a recently invented instrument that conveys the voice of the speaker to a distance in the very same manner that the voice reaches the people seated close by? Is it permissible to use this instrument to convey the speaker's voice to the audience?"*

Reply offered by Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi

> *"Let us first understand a rule that is rational as well as derived from a source. This rule has been employed by the Hanafi school of jurisprudence in many of its edicts. It says that it is necessary to forsake any such object that is permissible but does not reach the status of being a requirement of deen or is necessary to meet its objective if that object is potentially evil or has a*

greater possibility of being misused. It is but obvious that this rule is rational in nature, and the source cannot be brought into question given its acceptance by the respectable jurists. I would nevertheless relate the source: God says in the Qur'an that "And do not insult those they invoke other than Allah, lest they insult Allah in enmity without knowledge. [Surah alAn'am ayat 108]. While it is definitely allowed to denounce the false objects of worship, and at times it becomes recommended as well, but it is not always necessary to do so. This is because this purpose can be solved by employing other means as well, i.e. by wisdom and beautiful preaching and a healthy debate. And since it holds the potential risk of the disbeliever insulting God it has been disallowed.

Having elucidated this rule, it should also be known that conveying one's voice to the distant audience is not a necessary thing to do from the Islamic legal point of view. This is because there can be other means to convey the message to the distant audience which do not carry as much apprehension. Moreover, there is a potential risk of people citing this as an excuse to use this tool, or other such instruments, for the purpose of entertainment. Hence, it would be necessary to refrain from its use. This is in case the speaker is a common lecturer or orator. In case of the Friday or Eid sermon, it is far too evident that conveying the speaker's voice to the distant audience is absolutely unnecessary. This is because the sermon requires the presence of an assembly; the ability of the audience to listen to the sermon not being a necessary factor.

There is also a high risk of corruption involved in the usage of this instrument because this instrument would then have to be installed in the masjid, which amounts to sacrilege and violates the sanctity of the masjid.

Also, it leads to a resemblance with un-Islamic practices. It is to avoid this resemblance with

synagogues and churches that the respectable jurists have disallowed planting trees in the masjid. And God knows best!"

*****

Our reply to the original query

The edict quoted above belongs to one of the leading religious scholars of the world today. My knowledge is infinitesimal as compared to his. If I were to consider the vast difference in our ranks, it would not be appropriate for me to utter a word in this regard. Rather, I should abandon my research and quietly accept the views of this great scholar. But when I look back at the practice of our esteemed elders, I find that they preferred to ask *ma qaala?* (What has been said?) instead of *man qaala?* (Who has said it?). Students used to freely present such research that went against that of their teachers and juniors used to fearlessly put forward opinions that clashed with those of their seniors. They did this not under an impression that their knowledge exceeded or matched that of their elders, but because they believed that the quest for truth, and the research into it, is binding upon every student, and that in this quest and research they should rather concentrate on the fact of the matter instead of getting overawed or influenced by their elders' personalities. Our elders never insisted that a person should present his research only if he is equal or superior to others in knowledge, and that if he wasn't so then he should keep shut and discard his personal opinions to accept theirs instead. Had this mentality been prevalent during the early era, Imam Shafi'i would never have adopted a procedure that went against that of Imam Abu Haneefah or Imam Malik, and Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal would never have dared adopt a stance that clashed with that of his teacher, Imam Shafi'i. These teachers were the beacons of knowledge and guidance and their example serves as a guiding light for students of all times. Hence,

following in their footsteps, I would also lift my pen to present my opinion on the edict of the respectable scholar, despite being totally conscious of the limitations of my knowledge when compared to that of Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi.

The rule on which this edict has been based is definitely undisputed and is recognized not only by Hanafi jurists, but by jurists of other schools of thought as well. And there are many ayaat of the Qur'an that can be cited as the source from which it has been derived. But the matter of contention is whether this rule can or should be applied to this particular issue or not.

The loudspeaker cannot be regarded as an 'instrument of entertainment'. An instrument of entertainment would necessarily be an instrument that has been invented specifically for the use of entertaining others and it has no other application. The flute and the harmonium are examples of such instruments. By extension, this terminology can also be used for such instruments that might not have been invented for the primary purpose of entertainment but are almost always used to entertain others, the gramophone being a good example. The loudspeaker, in sharp contrast, does not fit either definition. It has been invented for the sole purpose of amplifying a sound and making it reach a distance. It is being used for both- entertainment as well as serious activities, with its use in serious activities comfortably surpassing its use in entertainment. It can be compared to a glass goblet that can be used to drink wine as well as fruit juices; or an electric bulb or fan that can be used in theatres, clubs and pubs as well as for productive activities. Now if these things cannot be termed as instruments of entertainment or instruments of evil just because they can be used in unlawful ways, then the loudspeaker also cannot be called so. If the usage of glass goblets, bulbs and fans does not come under the purview of adopting a resemblance with un-Islamic practices, then there is no reason why using the loudspeaker

should. If the permissibility of using of glass goblets does not make us apprehensive that people might use it as an excuse to drink wine, and if the use of electric bulbs and fans in masajid does not lead to the danger of people using it as an excuse to visit pubs, then there is nothing to get apprehensive about the loudspeaker as well. And if installing electric bulbs and fans does not desecrate a masjid, then why should installing a loudspeaker lead to its desecration?

There is no doubt about the fact that in today's times the loudspeaker is serving the evil causes more than it is serving the good ones. But is there anything today that is not serving the cause of evil? From the pen to the publishing press, railways, motorcars, airoplanes and even the radio- everything is being used predominantly to spread profanities and to meet evil ends, to oppress people and to commit sin. Every tool and power is being employed to propagate a culture that is based on forsaking, nay rebelling against God. This is because the task of exploring the treasures created by God and utilizing them is being done by those who have no faith in God. On the other hand, those who believe in God have abandoned this task of tapping into nature's resources and employing them in just causes. And this is what has led to the contamination of human culture, to the point that every instrument on earth has become an instrument of evil. Now if we were to leave each and every thing on the pretext of it being an instrument of evil or that using it resembles the act of disbelievers, then we would have to completely withdraw ourselves from society… which would be a much bigger mistake. This attitude of ours would weaken the culture that is pious and righteous and strengthen the culture of injustice and perversion. This is because the culture that is fuelled by machines can never be defeated by a culture that has itself abandoned all beneficial and powerful ways and means. It is but obvious that a person riding a bullock cart can never compete with one driving a motor car. How can

we compete with those who are able to convey their message in a fraction of a second to each and every corner of the world and influence the minds of billions of people, when our own condition is such that we are reluctant to use an instrument that is among God's gifts to mankind to even make our voices reach the back rows of a small gathering? The ones who are spreading the voice of evil would never want to let off a single person before making him hear their message, and the attitude of those who are spreading the voice of truth is that they are unconcerned whether the person at a distance is even able to hear their voice or not!

The consequences of this tendency are being and would be seen by every person. This means that we would keep discarding every weapon just because it has been touched by the enemy and has hence been rendered impure, while the enemy keeps collecting all those weapons and keeps attacking us.

It is true that Islamic law does not require us to make our voices reach the distant audience. But it would not be right to say that to make it reach that section of the audience or for the audience to hear our voice is not a requirement of Islamic law at all. The Qur'an is recited during prayers for the only purpose that people following the imam might listen to the recitation. The Qur'an itself points towards this purpose when it says, *"When the Qur'an is recited, listen to it and pay attention"* [Surah alA'araf ayat 204]. The sermon is also delivered for people to listen to it, and it is for this purpose that Islam forbids the devotees from conversing with each other during the sermon. That being heard is an objective is evident both rationally and from citations. It is obvious that a speech is made for people to listen to it. Words are uttered from the mouth only to make them reach someone's ears. You might ask that if that is the case, then why has Islam not made it compulsory. My reply is that it is one of the allowances given by Islam. These rules were framed at a time when there were no means available by which one's voice could

be conveyed across a distance. Even in today's times it is not always possible to have a loudspeaker arranged at all places and at all times. Hence, the act of hearing has not been made compulsory. Had it been made compulsory, the prayers of those who are unable to hear the recitation would not have been valid and the devotees sitting at a distance would not have been able to partake in the rewards of the sermon. However, this concession that has only been offered keeping in mind practical difficulties cannot be used as a decisive argument to claim that the use of loudspeakers does not solve any purpose at all, to the extent that it should not be used even if it is made available.

I also wish to make it clear that the reason I am writing on this topic at such lengths is not because I have any special affinity for the loudspeaker. All I desire is that Muslims should change their attitude towards scientific inventions and modern instruments and technology. These instruments are not impure per se; rather, it is the manner in which they are being used by the rebellious Western culture that is impure. Whatever God Almighty has subjected to the service of man is essentially pure and clean. It is their own right that they should be used in the manner prescribed by God. But they are being met with double injustice because those who abide by God's laws are not using them, and those who are actually using them obey the laws of Satan.

Tarjumanul Qur'an
(Rajab 1357 AH/ September 1938 CE)

Friday Congregational Prayers in Villages

A pious elderly gentleman from Punjab writes in his letter:

"The religious scholars subscribing to the Hanafi school of thought continue to state that Juma'a prayers (Friday congregational prayers) can only be offered in cities. However, the condition of cities today has become so deplorable that it is better if Muslim villagers (who have by and large remained untouched by the vanities of modern civilization) are dissuaded from going there. I own a building which houses a masjid and a small religious school. The surrounding villages have some Muslim households. They come to pray here every Friday and thus some lessons from the Qur'an, the Friday sermon and a little religious discourse falls on their ears. The teacher who teaches at our school instructs them on how to pray and corrects the prayers of those who make mistakes therein. The congregation swells up during the blessed month of Ramazan. However, the religious scholars hold the offering of Friday prayers at this place impermissible. If I were to discontinue with the Friday prayers here, these people would not go to the city either. If they are told that Friday prayers cannot be offered here and that should come here every Friday afternoon and offer the zuhr prayers, they would never agree to it. It is the lure of the Friday sermon and the expectations of the divine rewards it holds that makes these people offer prayers once every week. I am apprehensive of the fact that if the Friday prayers are discontinued, these people would be deprived of the sermons and discourses as well. There is city some

miles from here that has many masajid where Friday prayers are duly offered. But they are bereft of any such religious scholar who could provide them with proper guidance. Moreover, the markets of the city have the same things that are freely available elsewhere. If a villager were to go there, he would unnecessarily waste his money on useless purchases. I request your kind self to please guide us in this regard."

Reply:

The issue of establishing Friday prayers in villages is highly controversial, with many opinions been presented since the early centuries. Hence, we cannot arrive at any definite conclusion that would settle all those differences. What I would instead try to do is elaborate upon the opinion that I feel is correct.

At the very onset, it is necessary to understand the legal status of Friday prayers and the purpose for which God has asked us to establish it. Then, we should look into the guidelines regarding Friday prayers in the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet ﷺ and the issues contained therein. We should also analyze the extent to which the respectable jurists have been able to include those divine guidelines while formulating their opinions regarding the establishment of Friday Prayers in villages and to what extent have they been able to do justice to the purpose and requirements for which the Friday prayers have been prescribed. Only after we have discussed the above points can we conclude whether we should or should not permit Friday prayers in villages.

The Islamic community

When we ponder over the injunctions of Islamic law, one thing that becomes very obvious is that Islam does not restrict its goal to the reformation and purification of the

individual. Rather, it intends to gather all these reformed and purified individuals to form a group that would fulfil the obligations of God's vicegerency on earth and establish a society that would have the ability to encourage and promote the goodness imbibed in the human soul and suppress the evil ingrained therein. This is among the basic goals of Islamic law, and it is for this reason that all its injunctions are directed towards the collective lives of individuals instead of the individual himself. Although it exhausts all its strengths towards the reformation and purification of the individual, its ultimate objective is to prepare him for the membership of a purified society that has other sanctified members like him. It is for this reason that all the schemes it has adopted for the individual are such that they not only purify him, but also make such individuals unite to give rise to an ideal society.

Take fasting, for example. This is essentially a means of self-purification. But God has made it obligatory for all Muslims around the world to fast in the same thirty-day period so that all these purified souls might together become a purified community of reformed individuals through this collective act of worship. The same can be said about *zakaat*, which is totally based on collective life. The very manner in which it purifies the soul is by making it help and assist other souls. This collective aspect is way too prominent in Hajj as well. Now take the act of prayer (*salaat*), which is the most important and most effective among these to purify and reform the individual. It performs the same task five times a day that fasts perform thirty times a year, sacrifice performs once a year and Hajj performs once in a lifetime. Even in this act, God has espoused the formation of a righteous community along with the grooming of the individual. He prescribes five daily congregational prayers so that as many Muslims might come together to fulfill this obligation as is feasible. Moreover, He has picked out a specific time in a week for all the Muslims to come together and hearken to the

remembrance of God and get engrossed in His worship. Apart from this weekly gathering, He calls upon them every year at the end of Ramazan to follow the footsteps of Prophet Abraham (Peace be upon him) and come together from all parts of the world to complete the edifice that the five daily prayers had been building, and the weekly gatherings were rendering strength and expansion.

The Wisdom behind making Friday prayers obligatory

The above discussion makes it clear that the focus of all the acts of worship is towards the community. A common pattern that we observe in all acts of worship is that the ways in which they have been prescribed try to make it less of a personal and individual act of worship and more of a collective act, their form varying as per the need and situation of the act. Making it compulsory for everyone to offer the five daily prayers in congregation would have been impractical. It is not always possible for every person to offer all his five daily prayers with a congregation. Hence, it was felt sufficient to only encourage the people to offer all their prayers in a congregation, but at the same time they were also allowed to offer their prayers individually if they ever happen to miss the congregation. This allowance that was given keeping in view the personal needs and situations of the individual was compensated for by a weekly prayer that could only be offered in a congregation and which could not be offered individually at all. This is none other than the Friday prayer. Since this obligation was instituted to overcome the deficiencies caused by the allowance that was offered in the five daily prayers, which allowed for the person to offer these prayers individually, God wanted as many people to come together to offer this prayer as possible and discourage individuality and disharmony as much as possible.

The Importance of making Friday prayers obligatory

You would now understand why the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* have laid so much stress on the obligation of Friday prayers and why has so much importance been attached towards its establishment.

God says,

يَآيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِذَا نُوْدِيَ لِلصَّلٰوةِ مِنْ يَّوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ فَاسْعَوْا اِلٰى ذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ وَذَرُوا الْبَيْعَ ذٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝

"Believers, when the call for prayer is made on Friday, hasten to the remembrance of Allah and give up trading. That is better for you if you but knew."
[Surah alJumu'ah ayat 9]

The Prophet ﷺ has said,

"I feel like asking someone to lead the prayers in my stead while I go and burn down the houses of all those people who do not come (to the masjid) for Friday prayers." *Bukhari/Muslim]*

He has also warned us that:

"The name of such a person who forsakes the Friday prayers without any valid excuse would be noted down as a hypocrite in a book whose words can neither be erased nor changed." *[Shafi'i]*

"The Friday prayers are obligatory upon every such person who believes in God and the Day of Judgment... God would not care about him who neglects it because of his involvement in some fun and frolic or some business; for God is Ghani (not in need of anyone or anything) and Hameed (deserving of all praise and gratitude)." *[Daar Qatni]*

"People should refrain from forsaking the Friday prayers, lest God puts a seal on their hearts, then they would join the ranks of the ignorant." *[Muslim]*

"He who listens to the call for Friday prayers but does not turn up for the prayers, then listens to the call on the next Friday and does not turn up that week as well,

and repeats the same for the third consecutive week has a seal put on his heart, and his heart is made that of a hypocrite." *[Tabrani]*

Give it a thought. Why has hastening to the Friday prayers and abandoning all our work for its sake been so much emphasized upon? Why does a person as merciful and compassionate as the Prophet ﷺ feel like burning down the houses of those people who do not turn up for the Friday prayers? What exactly is it that makes a person forsaking the Friday prayers stand on the same pedestal as a hypocrite, and why have so many warnings been issued in this regard? All this is because the Friday prayers grant strength and stability to the Muslim community. It fulfils the purpose of the five daily prayers. It is a vital means of meeting the greater objective of Islam that stays with him till his last breath- the formation of a righteous group and establishment of an ideal society. Abandoning it is akin to abandoning the object of Islam and to undermine it is to undermine Islam itself!

Two basic principles

Whatever has been discussed till now leads us to two conclusions:

1. The obligatory nature of the Friday prayers surpasses that of other routine prayers. Its establishment is utmost important towards the fulfillment of Islam's primary objective. Hence, it is better to refrain from adopting those supplementary acts that lead one to forsake Friday prayers and to instead adopt those that help in its establishment.
2. The primary objective of God behind instituting the Friday prayers is to promote community feelings among the people. He wants to do away with the disharmony among people and bring them together. Hence, it should always be kept in mind that the gatherings should not be in the form of broken

fragments and the congregation should be as large as possible.

Some practical details that have unanimous consensus

The passage of the Qur'an that obligates the Friday prayers mentions that people should rush towards it, leaving behind their mundane chores and activities. But it does not specify any time for this prayer or where it should be offered. It does not tell us who should offer it and who should not, in which situation should it be offered and in which situations it should not be offered. These questions were left for the Prophet ﷺ to answer. All that was said in the Qur'an was that, إِذَا نُودِيَ لِلصَّلَاةِ مِن يَوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ فَاسْعَوْا إِلَىٰ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَذَرُوا الْبَيْعَ *"O you who have believed, when the call for prayer is made on Friday, hasten to the remembrance of Allah and give up all trading."(Surah aljumah:9)*

We find answers to the above questions in the Prophet's words and his uninterrupted practice in this regard. Additional clarifications can be found in the words and deeds of those companions who were groomed in his immediate care. The information that we derive from these sources are as follows:

1. The Prophet ﷺ and his companions have always offered the Friday prayers at the time of *zuhr*. Thus, the time for Friday prayers is *zuhr*.
2. The Prophet and his companions have never offered the Friday prayers without the accompanying sermon. Hence, it is necessary to have a sermon along with the Friday prayers.
3. The slaves, women, children, the sick and travelers have been exempted from offering Friday prayers. Only those men who are past the age of puberty, mentally sound, physically healthy and free (not slaves) have been obligated with this prayer.

4. During the age of the Prophet ﷺ and his blessed companions, the Friday prayers were never offered in forests, deserted areas, temporary sheds or camps. It thus follows that the Friday prayers should be offered in only those areas that have a permanent residential population.
5. The Friday prayers have never been offered in private apartments either. They have always been offered in those places which are open to all Muslims. Hence, a public consent is necessary for this prayer.

Differences in opinion and the reasons behind them

All the scholars are unanimous over the points we have enumerated above, because they have explicit proofs to support them. None of the other supplementary matters enjoy this status. This has led to the scholars having a lot of differences while arriving at their details. For instance, what should be the strength of the congregation, who should establish the prayers, whether there should be a single sermon or two etc.

One of these questions relates to the kind of township required for the Friday prayers and from how far should people come to offer prayer in that township.

Imam Shafi'i opines that it is impermissible to establish Friday prayers in a village whose residents relocate elsewhere during the summer/winter. The prayers can be offered at every such village which has at least forty such free men who have passed the age of puberty and are mentally sound. In order to lend support to his opinion, he cites the guidelines that have been narrated by Ibn Abbas in which it is stated that a village called Jawathi in Bahrain was the first place outside Madinah where the Friday prayers were offered. The respected Imam also cites the report which says that Caliph Umar had replied to a request made by the people of Bahrain by asking them to offer the Friday prayers wherever they are. The first of these

narrations has the word *qariah* (village), which is an ambiguous word. There is nothing in this word or the entire narration that suggests that there should be at least forty men in that village. Neither do we know the source from which Imam Shafi'i has arrived at this figure. As for the second narration, it goes as much in favour of the opinion presented by Imam Shafi'i as much as it goes against it. The narration can open up ways for offering Friday prayers in the forests and wilderness as well, something that Imam Shafi'i considers unlawful.

Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal concurs with Imam Shafi'i, and he too cites the same narrations to support his opinion.

Imam Malik avers that Friday prayers can be offered in every such village that has people permanently residing there, even if the population of its men does not touch forty.

Imam Abu Haneefah and his students insist that Friday prayers can be offered only in cities. It is impermissible to offer it in villages.

(May God have mercy on all these respected scholars)

The prerequisite of having a city and its explanation

The condition of having a city that has been levied by the Hanafi school of jurisprudence traces its roots to a narration[1] by Ali (God be pleased with him) which states that 'There can be no Juma'a (Friday prayers), no Tashreeq, no Fitra and no Azha except in a city'.

They also base their opinion on the fact that whenever the companions (God be pleased with them all) conquered a nation, they never set up pulpits in villages. This is regarded as a consensus among the companions about the

[1] This narration has been recorded by Ibn Abi Shaibah and Abdul Razzaq in their respective collections. But in both places it has been attributed to Ali instead of saying that it has been narrated from the Prophet ﷺ.

prerequisite of having a city for the establishment of Friday prayers.

But what would be the definition of 'city'? Scholars of the Hanafi school of jurisprudence are divided on this matter, with two different opinions being attributed to Imam Abu Haneefah himself. A few of these opinions are being listed below:

1. A city is a place that has an Ameer and a judge, who would execute the law and is authorized to punish the guilty.
2. A city is a place that is unable to accommodate all its residents in its biggest masjid.
3. A city is a place that has markets and streets and residential blocks. It should have an authorized person in power who can avenge injustice on behalf of the victim and a religious scholar who can be approached to enquire about one's issues.
4. The place that the leader declares to be a city and issues a command to establish Friday prayers therein is a city.
5. A city is a place where people belonging to all professions are able to practice their respective professions.
6. A city should have a population in excess of ten thousand.
7. A city is a place that has a population not less than three thousand.

There are scores of such definitions that the jurists have come up with.

The first thing that needs to be kept in mind is that there is no consensus among the Muslim community at large about having a city as a precondition for establishing Friday prayers. The majority of jurists and Hadith scholars have dissented to this view. Even if this condition is acknowledged, it is not clear what is exactly meant by the word city. The question that arises is that given the

disputed and ambiguous nature of this condition, would it be appropriate to use it as an excuse to declare that a large population of Muslims is not required to offer a prayer as important and vital as the Friday prayer? In my opinion, it is the requirement of piety and rationality that before jumping the gun and issuing an edict absolving a population of this prayer, we need to delve into the reasons behind the differences among the respected jurists, the purpose they have understood behind the institution of Friday prayers, and the wisdom behind the practical steps they have adopted to meet that purpose. Perhaps such a study would open up ways for us to allow many of those people to offer Friday prayers who have been hitherto bereft of it.

The actual reason behind differences

As we have discussed earlier, two factors hold prime importance with regards the establishment of Friday prayers. These are:

1. **Obligation:** The obligatory nature of Friday prayers, which is more than that of other prayers and is mandatory upon every such man who is mentally sound, physically healthy, free and has passed the age of puberty.
2. **Congregation:** That it should be offered in congregation, so as to get rid of disharmony and create as much bonding and collectivity as possible among the Muslims.

All the jurists have brought into consideration both these factors and have tried to do justice to both. However, it is not always possible to do so. If obligation is given more importance, we tend to lose out on the congregation part. This is because the obligatory nature of the prayer makes it binding upon even a handful of men to perform it wherever they find it feasible. On the contrary, if congregation is given more importance, then the aspect of

obligation would have to be compromised upon, because in that case the lack of a sufficiently large gathering would waive off the obligation. In order to circumvent this difficulty, the respectable jurists have tried to strike a balance between these two factors.

Imam Shafi'i and Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal considered forty people as sufficient to meet the condition of congregation and ruled that Friday prayers should be offered in every such village that has a minimum population of forty men. Additionally, they also ruled that every free man within hearing range of the *azaan* (call for prayer) that is called out from that village is also required to join the congregation.

Imam Malik sets the minimum attendance at twelve men. Accordingly, the Friday prayers came to be held in comparatively smaller villages as well. It was also declared obligatory upon all those people who stay within a radius of 6 miles from the place where the Friday prayers.

Imam Abu Haneefah was of the view that permitting Friday prayers in small hamlets leads to disharmony, and the purpose for which congregation was prescribed is not completely met. He also noted that all over countries like Iraq and Syria, where the influence of the companions was still afresh, there was not a single village that boasted of a pulpit or a masjid where Friday prayers were offered. He was also aware of Ali's narration (God be pleased with him) which says that Friday prayers can only be offered in cities. He was also told that when Hajjaj bin Yusuf established the Friday prayers in Ahwaz, Hasan Basari exclaimed, "May the curse of God be upon Hajjaj! This wretched person is establishing Friday prayers in villages instead of cities." All this convinced him to decree that Friday prayers should be offered in the principal city of every area, and all those people on whom the Friday prayers are obligatory and who stay within a radius of three miles should assemble in that city for the prayers.

The original reasons behind the Hanafi view

We should have a look at the conditions prevalent at those times as well. The government was Islamic. Judges and police officers were present in each and every village and small town who used to pass judgments and grant justice to the aggrieved. Since there is always a danger of chaos and disorder erupting in a huge gathering, it was best to have it at a place where law and order could easily be maintained. Moreover, the era of the senior Hanafi jurists was when Iraq, Persia and other countries were densely populated, causing their villages and town to merge with each other. The civilization was at its peak. The bloom witnessed in trade and commerce had turned small towns into cities. This has led to the various definitions of 'city' that you have read above; otherwise having a judge and police and markets and streets and populations of ten thousand or three thousand hold no legal status in deciding the obligation of Friday prayers at all. The actual condition is having a 'city'. All jurists have tried to define this word by considering those features that are unique to a city.

Let us ignore these features for a while and try to understand why the condition of having a city was found necessary for the establishment of Friday prayers. The only reason that surfaces is that it is the Centre. That place that holds a central position in an area or has been declared to be a central place for the establishment of Friday prayers is a 'city'. Declaring the institution of Friday prayers invalid in its surrounding areas does not mean that people of those areas stand absolved of offering the obligatory Friday prayers. All it means is that those people are required to arrive at that central location to offer their Friday prayers. They would be held guilty of committing a sin if they fail to turn up without a valid excuse.

When we analyze the opinions of Hanafi scholars in this regard, we come to know that the reason why they have instituted the condition of establishing Friday prayers only

in cities and not in villages is the same as the one we have mentioned in the preceding paragraph.

Allamah Ibn Hummam writes,

"It would be permissible for an Imam to declare a place to be a city and command the faithful to offer Friday prayers at that place."

[Fath alQadeer Vol 1, Page 409]

Here, the Imam has been authorized to 'declare a place to be a city'. This is because there is no concept of an Islamic life bereft of an Imam or an Emir. However, in those unfortunate places where there is no Islamic leadership in place, would it be unlawful if we abide by Imam Malik's decree and declare a big village or town of that area that has a sizable Muslim population and a big enough masjid as a 'city' for the sake of establishing the Friday prayers?

Allahmah Ibn Hummam further writes,

"The Friday prayers are obligatory even upon those who stay in the vicinity of the 'city', just as they are obligatory upon the residents of that 'city'. It is incumbent upon such people to travel there and offer their prayers. Jurists, however, differ upon the definition of 'vicinity'. Imam Abu Yusuf suggests that it covers a radius of three kos [1 kos is about 3.07 km or 1.91 miles... Translator]. Some others have suggested 1 mile, some others have suggested 2 miles and some others have even gone with 6 miles. Imam Malik has also preferred the radius of 6 miles. He avers that after offering Friday prayers at a particular place, if a man can comfortably reach his home by the same night then it is obligatory upon him to offer the prayers. He stands exempted if he stays farther away. The author of Badae has preferred this opinion."

[Fath alQadeer Vol 1, Page 411]

There are certain aHadith that lend credence to this opinion. There is a Hadith recorded by Imam Tirmizi that has been narrated by Imam Abu Hurairah which states,

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Friday prayers are obligatory upon such a person who can return to his family by night."

Another Hadith in Bukhari has:

"Lady Aishah narrates that people used to arrive for the Friday prayers from their residential quarters and havaali drenched in sweat, covered with dust. It so happened one day that while the Prophet was sitting in my room, one of those men came to visit the Prophet. The Prophet told him that it would have been better if you people have a bath on this day."

The first Hadith is self-explanatory. As for the second one, it mentions that people used to come from the *havaali* areas to participate in the Friday prayers. *Havaali* referred to those villages surrounding Madinah about which Allamah Ibn Hajar states that they were located at a distance of 4 miles or more from Madinah. It is obvious that those who used to travel on foot or camel-back for the Friday prayers from these villages could only return to their homes by sundown. Those were the days when we didn't have buses and cars. If people were required to come for Friday prayers from a distance of 6 miles in *those* conditions, then it should not be difficult for people to travel even 20 miles today, given the comfortable and faster means of transport available to us. Nevertheless, keeping in mind the different situations that people might face in different areas, it would not be prudent to specify this radius in miles. Instead, it would be better to stick to the yardstick offered in the Hadith. In other words, a person should travel to the central location of his area to offer the Friday prayers if he can comfortably return to his home by sunset. He who cannot do so should offer zuhr prayers in his own area.

It should also be understood that the criteria of 'city' that have been postulated by the jurists should not be ignored either. If Muslims of a rural area wish to declare a town in their area as 'city' for the sake of offering Friday prayers, then they ought to consider the following criteria in order of preference:

1. That location should have highest population of Muslims.
2. It should have a large enough masjid to accommodate as many devotees as possible.
3. There should be a religious scholar who can guide the people on religious matters and has good oratory skills in order to deliver sermons and discourses.
4. There should be a government authority in place to maintain law and order.
5. It should have a market from which people of neighbouring villages may buy their essentials.

These points are not prerequisites to establish Friday prayers at a given place, but they should be preferred while selecting a place for establishing Friday prayers.

This is from my own understanding; true knowledge lies with God alone.

Tarjumanul Qur'an
(Muharram 1356 AH/ March 1937 CE)

Friday Prayers in Villages and the Hanafi ruling in this regard

I have received letters of two gentlemen in response to the assessment of the Hanafi jurists' ruling regarding the establishment of the Friday prayers in villages that we have discussed in the preceding chapter. Allow me to reproduce the same here:

1. "All I want to say regarding Friday prayers in villages is that the core issue has a vast scope of allowance. Except for the Hanafi jurists, all other jurists concur with this view. But I could not understand this assessment of the Hanafi school of jurisprudence. Their ruling that Friday prayers are not mandatory upon villagers is absolutely well known. If you have made any specific research regarding it then please share the same at your earliest convenience."
2. "The edict you have issued regarding Friday prayers and its sermon being mandatory in villages is beyond our comprehension. None of the four principal jurists favour this opinion, because every school of thought has set certain preconditions for the establishment of Friday prayers. The views of the editor of Tarjumanul Qur'an can find concurrence only with today's *ghair muqalladeen* (those who do not subscribe to any of the traditional schools of Islamic jurisprudence).

Reply:

Before attempting a reply to these letters, let me make one thing quite clear. I am by no means a rebel who simply adopts a practice in matters of *deen* following my own personal opinion and arrogantly counters the opinion of

scholars without giving any importance to valid Islamic sources. I am but a student. After putting in all my efforts in the research of an issue, I present my conclusions without adding or keeping back anything whatsoever. And if I happen to be proved wrong, I never hesitate to take my opinion back. My intention behind discussing the establishment of Friday prayers in villages was not at all to open up a Pandora's box of chaos and strife. Actually, my reading of the current state of affairs tells me that it is the need of the hour to analyze this issue and understand the correct Islamic injunction in this regard. Hence, I sought to turn the attention of our religious scholars towards this issue. It is my ardent desire that those elders whom God has given religious insight and knowledge should acknowledge the importance of this issue and grace me and all Muslims with their research on this particular topic. However, since this discussion has been initiated by me, I stand obliged to present my study in detail.

The article I had written on the validity of offering Friday prayers in villages was primarily based upon the words and practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, his companions and the points deduced from Islamic law. This is probably why some people have been falsely led to believe that I am opposed to the Hanafi school of thought and am presenting an independent (which is common parlance is referred to as *ghair muqalladana*) opinion in its stead. Hence, I would now stick to the Hanafi school of thought to present my arguments on this issue.

There are four issues that require our attention. We would be able to solve this matter if we solve these issues:

1. What is the nature of obligation of the Friday prayers?
2. What are the conditions for offering Friday prayers and what is the status of these conditions?
3. Have these conditions ever been altered? Is there scope for any further alteration?

4. Is it permissible to meet this obligation by adopting a system which differs from the edicts issued by the Hanafi scholars but is not against their core principles?

I shall now discuss these issues one by one....

1. The obligation of Friday Prayers

All the religious scholars of Islam are unanimous that Friday prayers are *farz-e-ain* i.e. obligatory upon every individual in his personal capacity. The Hanafi jurists also concur with this consensus. Accordingly, Allamah Sarkhasi writes in his book, alMabsoot:

> *"The Friday prayers are obligatory on the basis of the Qur'an and the Sunnah (blessed practice of the Prophet ﷺ)... the entire Muslim community is unanimous in holding it obligatory."*

Allamah Ibn Hummam writes in Fath alQadeer:

> *"The Friday prayers are such an obligation that its obligation is derived from the Qur'an and the Sunnah, and the entire community is unanimous that the person who denies it is a disbeliever."* [Vol 1, Page 407]

After detailing the arguments in support of its obligatory nature, he writes:

> *"We have resorted to such a detailed discussion on the obligatory nature of the Friday prayers because there are some ignorant people who allege that the Hanafi school of thought denies the obligatory nature of the Friday prayers. Their misunderstanding in this regard owes its source to a statement of Qadoori that, 'Although the prayer of a person who offers the zuhr prayers at home on a Friday without any excuse whatsoever would be valid, it is detestable for him to do so'. We shall discuss this statement later. In this statement, he has used the word detestable to actually mean 'impermissible'. As for the validity of the zuhr prayer that has been mentioned here, we shall discuss it later. In any case, our scholars belonging to the*

Hanafi school of thought have clarified that the obligatory nature of the Friday prayers is more serious than that of the zuhr prayers, and that the one who denies the obligatory nature of the Friday prayers is a disbeliever." *[Ibid, Page 408]*

In his work, Sharah alAnayah ala alHidayah, Allamah Babaraqi writes:

"We have been commanded to forsake the zuhr prayers in favour of the Friday prayers, and zuhr prayers are undoubtedly obligatory. An obligatory act can be abandoned only for an act that is even more obligatory." *[Vol 1, page 408]*

We understand from the above citations that the rule that Friday prayers are obligatory is not based on any ratiocination or deduction by scholars, but it is the Qur'an and the Sunnah that have made them obligatory upon Muslims. Moreover, its obligation is such that a denial of its obligatory nature makes a person a disbeliever. It is obvious that absolving any Muslim from such a strict obligation would require one to be extremely cautious and fearful of the consequences thereof.

The first thing that should be understood is that it is only the Qur'an and the Sunnah that can absolve a person from performing an act that has been made obligatory by the Qur'an and the Sunnah in the first place.

Secondly, if we come across a statement by an Imam or a jurist that alludes to it being non-obligatory upon someone, then we must very carefully try to ascertain the real intention of the person who has issued such a statement before jumping to any conclusion. It might possibly be the case that the situation and reasons behind his statement are correct and we are misunderstanding his statement by going with the face value of his words without considering the context in which he must have made such a statement.

Then, the caution that needs to be exercised in declaring an obligation as non-obligatory is still far less

than the caution that needs to be exercised in declaring it as disliked or impermissible or a sin. There is a vast difference between an obligation that has its source in the Qur'an and the Sunnah and an act that is impermissible and a sin. There should be an incredibly strong argument to override this difference. It is hazardous to venture into such premises with weak arguments in one's quiver.

2. The Conditions for offering Friday prayers

Now we should look into those conditions that if left unfulfilled absolve a person from offering the Friday prayers. Which are those conditions and what is the nature of these conditions?

The Hanafi jurists have classified the conditions for offering the Friday prayers into two categories- those that relate to the person concerned and those that ought to exist in his surroundings.

The first category of conditions includes:

- The person should be a resident (not a traveler).
- He should be free (not a slave).
- He should be an adult man (one who has passed his age of puberty), not a woman or a child.
- He should be well and healthy (not sick and disabled).

[alMabsoot. Vol 2, page 22]

The Hanafi jurists regard the following Hadith as the source of these conditions:

The Prophet ﷺ said, "Friday prayers are obligatory on him who has faith in God and the Day of Judgment. However, the travelers, slaves, children, women and the sick stand exempted."

This allowance that has been made with regards the travelers, slaves, women and sick only means that if there is no harm if they do not attend the Friday prayers. No scholar has ever taken this Hadith to mean that these people are not

allowed to attend the Friday prayers. Nor has anyone ever ruled that if they happen to attend the Friday prayers, they would be guilty of committing a sin because of leaving their zuhr prayers. Women used to attend the Friday prayers during the time of the Prophet ﷺ. Even the slaves used to attend the congregation. No blind person used to remain sitting at home if he could find someone to lead him to the masjid. To none of these did the Prophet say that since you have been absolved of attending the Friday prayers you should offer the zuhr prayers instead, lest you become guilty of committing the sin of forsaking the zuhr prayers.

Allamah Sarkhasi writes:

"These are conditions for making it obligatory, not conditions for performing it. It would be permissible for a traveler, a slave, a woman and a sick person to attend the Friday prayer. Imam Hasan (God be pleased with him) narrates that ladies used to offer the Friday prayers with the Prophet ﷺ and they were instructed not to apply perfume when they come to the masjid. The reason the Friday prayers have not been made obligatory upon them is not that these prayers are such that they would be spoiled by their attendance therein. They have been exempted only to save them the trouble of offering it. If they wish to bear with this trouble, then they would be equal to the other devotees who are attending the congregation." [Vol 2, page 23]

The second category includes those conditions that have been declared to be prerequisites for performing the Friday prayers or those conditions that are necessary to be fulfilled for the prayers to be valid. If these conditions are not met, then the Friday prayers would not be considered offered.

There are six such conditions:

- City
- Time

- Sermon
- Congregation
- Ruling authority
- Public consent

The point of contention in our discussion is only the first condition, i.e. city. However, before discussing it, it is necessary to delve into the nature and status of these conditions.

Some of these conditions have explicit evidence in the words and deeds of the Prophet ﷺ. For example, time. It is proved without any ambiguity that the time for the Friday prayers is the same as that of zuhr. Similarly, the sermon is also explicitly proved because the Prophet never offered the Friday prayers without delivering the sermon, and the Qur'an also makes mention of it. In the same manner, the need of a congregation is also an undisputed condition; the dispute, in this matter, revolves around the required strength of the congregation. The clause of Public consent can also be found in the uninterrupted practice of the Prophet ﷺ, the companions (God be pleased with them) and the respectable jurists (God have mercy upon them all), and it is a necessary requirement of Islamic law as well.

On the contrary, the conditions of 'city' and 'ruling authority' have no source in the Qur'an or the Sunnah. They are mostly based on ratiocination and scholarly deduction, and hence their being conditions for the validity of the Friday prayers is also disputable.

The condition of a ruler has been derived from this Hadith:

> *"...so he who forsakes the Friday prayers, considering it to be unimportant and a light command, despite having a tyrant or just Imam (leader/ruler having authority) over him, then God would not purify him. Know for sure that neither is his prayer valid, nor his*

fasts until he repents. If he repents, God would accept his repentance."

There is also a statement by Hasan Basari that has been narrated by Ibn Abi Shaibah which goes:

"There are four things that are related to a ruling authority, which includes the establishment of Friday and Eid prayers."

However, the Hadith and the statement quoted above are both inconclusive in saying that Friday prayers would be impermissible in the absence of a leader or a ruling authority. All that is obvious from the Hadith is that it is a much greater sin to forsake the Friday prayer in a place that has an Islamic government. This is as good as a person saying that 'May God curse the person who committed a theft in the masjid'. This does not mean that that person regards the environment of a masjid a precondition for theft to be a sin. Rather, he is specifying the scene of crime to add emphasis upon the intensity of the sin. In the same manner, the Prophet ﷺ cited the presence of an Islamic ruler, or in other words the presence of an Islamic authority, as an aggravating factor in the intensity of the sin committed by the person in neglecting his Friday prayer. This is the reason why other aHadith dealing with the obligation of Friday prayers are devoid of any mention of an *Imam*. Also, other aHadith that deal with the consequences of abandoning the Friday prayers are less intense in the nature of their reprimand than this Hadith.

Similarly, the statement quoted by Ibn Abi Shaibah does not prove that having a ruler is a prerequisite for establishing the Friday prayers. All that is said in the statement is that there are four things that a ruler should look into, which includes establishing the Friday and Eid prayers. How on earth does this prove that this practice should be done away with if there is no ruler? If someone says that it is the responsibility of a father to marry off his

daughter, then this does not mean that she should remain unmarried if she does not have a father!

As for the condition of 'city', it owes its source to this Hadith:

> *"The Friday and the Eid prayers would not be offered except in a misr jamae (city)."*[1]

There is also a statement by Ali (God be pleased with him) that:

"There can be no Friday prayer or tashreeq or Eid ul Fitr or Eid ul Azha except in a *misr jamae* (city)."

However, there is no authentic source that defines what exactly '*misr jamae*' is. I have exhausted all my resources, but I have not yet arrived at a single Hadith or statement by a companion that defines the limits of *misr jamae*. The various descriptions of 'city' that have been provided in the books of Hanafi jurists are all bereft of any reference to any Hadith or companion's statement.

This is the status of these two conditions. And this is precisely why there can be, and there indeed is, a difference of opinion regarding them. Do they qualify to be included in the list of those conditions that are required to be fulfilled for the performance and validity of the Friday prayers or not? The Hanafi jurists have themselves made regular amendments in these conditions. This proves that the Hanafi jurisprudence has enough scope to allow for further amendments in these conditions if the situation so demands (provided the basic principles of Islamic law are kept intact while doing so).

3. The conditions that are worth amending

Let us begin with the condition of a ruling authority. Imam Shafi'i had refused to accept this as a condition from

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[1] It should be remembered that this Hadith has been attributed to Ali instead of saying that it has been narrated from the Prophet ﷺ. Moreover, Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal regards its chain as weak. [Neel alAwtar Vol 3, page 198]

the very beginning. Later, the Hanafi jurists were also compelled to disown it. As long as there existed such rulers who had at least some regard for their religious responsibilities, the Hanafi jurists could not see anything wrong with this condition of theirs which stated that: 'The establishment of Friday prayers depends upon the permission of the ruler and it is impermissible to offer Friday prayers in the absence of a ruler'. But when the era of irreligious and impious rulers began, the Hanafi jurists realized that this clause has made a religious obligation conditional to the permission and consent of worldly rulers, to the point that if they were to so desire, this obligation would be rendered futile. Hence, they issued an edict that if the ruler is neglectful, then Friday prayers would be established based upon the mutual agreement of the Muslims. Then came a period when the Muslim lands were being governed by non-Muslim rulers and an enormous population of Muslims became absolutely bereft of an Islamic government. At this juncture, the jurists were compelled to issue this edict:

> *"As for those countries which are under non-Muslim rule, it is permissible for the Muslim residents of those countries to arrange for the Friday and Eid prayers on their own. The Muslims may appoint a qazi by mutual agreement and it would be incumbent upon them to desire a Muslim ruler."* *[Shami]*

In this manner, the clause that was initially considered a condition for the performance and validity of the Friday prayers did not even remain a condition for making it obligatory, and it came to be eventually known that the condition of a ruling authority is not a condition at all.

This is where we understand the difference between a prophet and a jurist. The farsightedness of a prophet owes its source to divinely acquired knowledge. Hence, his commands remain relevant in all ages and situations. A jurist, on the other hand, can never liberate himself from the constraints of time and space, no matter how wise a

sage he might be; nor can his vision encompass or his rulings be in accordance with all ages and situations.

Those whom God had given the gift of comprehension of *deen* understood this factor very well even after the passage of the 4th Century AH. With the change in situation, they used to amend the fine points of the juristic school they followed, and their amendments used to become a part of the same juristic school that they followed despite they doing so on their own accord. Sadly however, the people belonging to the age of Islam's decline began regarding the opinion of the Imam as rigid and inflexible as the words of God and His messenger. These people began considering it a sin to amend the ruling of the jurists as per the situation even if it created hurdles in abiding by the command that has its source in the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ. Accordingly, jurists belonging to this enlightened class had started issuing edicts after the establishment of British rule in India that since we no longer have an Islamic government in place, it is impermissible to establish the Friday prayers here because one of the conditions pertaining to the validity of Friday prayers (the presence of an Islamic ruler) can no longer be fulfilled. Fortunately we still had such religious scholars in India whom God had granted proper religious knowledge and insight. They strongly opposed this movement. Maulana Abdul Hayy Firangi Mahali went as far as to write:

> *"There is no doubt about the fact that Friday prayers are obligatory upon Indians despite the establishment of Christian rule here and the appointment of disbelieving rulers. It is appropriate to establish the Friday prayers by the mutual agreement and consent of the Muslims. He who issues an edict that the Friday prayers are no longer obligatory has himself gone astray and he has misguided others as well."*

It is because of this edict that all Indians subscribing to the Hanafi school of thought- scholars and common folk-

are observing the Friday prayers.[1] This, despite the fact that the clause of Hidayah, "*It is not permissible to establish the Friday prayers except in the presence of a ruler or a person whom the ruler has given due authority*" is still studied and taught all over the country.

If making supplementary amendments in the rulings issued by the jurists in view of the prevailing circumstances is indeed *ghair muqalladiyat* (not subscribing to any traditional school of Islamic jurisprudence), then I'm sorry to say that all Indian followers of the Hanafi school of thought have already been affected by such *ghair muqalladiyat*!

The Condition of 'City'

Just like the condition of ruling authority, the condition of a 'city' has also not found any acceptance with Imam Shafi'i and Imam Malik. While there is a consensus that i is inappropriate to observe the Friday prayers in forests tents and transitory camps, and it is also agreed upon tha the establishment of Friday prayers requires some sort o civilization to exist in that area, there exists a dispute ove how big should the town be for the establishment of Friday prayers. Imam Shafi'i contends that it can be observed in a place that has a minimum of forty permanent resident (those who do not migrate during the summer/winter t another place). Imam Malik has opined that a figure les than forty would also suffice. However, the Hanafi rule i that there ought to be a '*misr jamae*' (city) for th establishment of Friday prayers.

There is no doubt about the fact that we do find th word '*misr jamae*' in the Hadith. However, as I hav mentioned earlier, its limits have not been discussed in an

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[1] It is an unnerving fact that if this ignorant idea had been accepted i India at that time, we would have heard our elders say that there wa once a time when the Friday prayers used to be observed in th country as well.

Hadith or statement by the companions or their immediate followers. Hence, there is a scope of deliberation in this matter. Such deliberation has led to various limits being defined in different ages, to the point that a single Imam has resorted to different definitions at different periods of time.

Three different definitions have been attributed to Imam Abu Yusuf:

- '*misr jamae*' is that place where a ruler and a judge execute Islamic laws and issue Islamic penalties. One of Imam Abu Haneefah's definitions also matches with this one. Karkhi and some other jurists have also adopted this opinion.
- A city is that place whose biggest masjid would not be able to accommodate all its residents (specifically those on whom the Friday prayers are obligatory) and there is a need to construct one more masjid. Ibn Shuja has preferred this opinion. Abu Abdullah alSalji has also adopted it.
- A city is that place which has a minimum population of ten thousand people.

It is quite obvious that all these three definitions are at variance with each other and the same Imam has presented them at three different occasions. Later, different jurists adopted one or the other of these definitions, despite the fact that they were not *mujtahideen* (independent jurists who used to derive laws on their own accord).

One definition that has been attributed to Imam Abu Haneefah has been mentioned in the first point above. Another definition presented by him states that:

> *'A city is a place which has streets and markets, residential quarters, a person who is authorized to provide justice to the aggrieved and a religious*

scholar who can be approached to solve Islamic legal issues.'[1]

Thus, Imam Abu Haneefah has changed twice and Imam Abu Yusuf has amended thrice the definition of 'city'. In later times, different people presented different definitions of 'city', and this process of amending the definition of 'city' continued. For instance, Allamah Sarkhasi writes:

"It is the opinion of certain of our elders (he does not mention who these elders are) that a city is a place where people of all occupations are able to practice their professions and earn a decent living from their work without having to travel outside."[2]

Another definition that Barjandi has narrated from Kanzul Ibaad states that in the opinion of certain jurists,

"A city is a place where there is an incidence of birth and an incidence of death every day."

One more definition by an anonymous jurist reproduced in Kanzul Ibaad is as follows:

"A city is that place whose census cannot be obtained without resorting to a tedious procedure."

The string of such definitions has continued unabated in each age. Even as late as a few decades ago, religious scholars have come up with more than dozens of definitions of the word '*misr jamae*'. This tells us that the definition of the clause of 'city' has been disputed among the Hanafi jurists themselves; there not being any standard definition of '*misr jamae*'. But now if a new definition is adopted, there is a danger of being included in the ranks of *ghair muqalladeen*. Moreover, it should be more appealing to the pious of the community if on the basis of the principles laid down by the Hanafi school of thought a definition of city is adopted that creates opportunities for

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[1] Please refer Hidayah, Fath alQadeer and Sharah alAnayah ala alHidayah vol 1, pages 409, 411.

[2] Please refer Kitaab alMabsoot Vol 2, Page 24.

fulfilling the obligation instead of creating hurdles towards its fulfillment.

4. The Final Issue

Now, I shall focus my attention to the final issue of our discussion. This issue, as stated above, is:

> *'Is it permissible to meet this obligation by adopting a system which differs from the edicts issued by the Hanafi scholars but is not against their core principles?'*

It is clearly evident from the above discussion that it is permissible to do so. If a person continues to remain a subscriber of the Hanafi school of thought despite nullifying the clause of 'ruling authority' and amending the definition and requirements of 'city' time and again, then there is no reason why there should be no room in this school of thought for a system that allows the fulfillment of an obligation while abiding by the principles of the Hanafi school of thought.

After studying the injunctions concerned I am led to believe that the purpose for which Islam has instituted the Friday prayers would not be fulfilled if it is observed individually in small villages and hamlets. Hence, it has been commanded that it should be offered in a '*misr jamae*'. The word, '*misr jamae*' itself points towards the fact that it is such an area that unites small groups or a place where people of various small localities can come together to offer the Friday prayers. This does not require shops or markets or strength of population or other such factors; nor do these factors have any direct relation with the establishment of Friday prayers per se. It is certainly not the case that the validity of Friday prayers is dependent upon the presence of shops and markets in the vicinity, is it? All it needs is such a town that can be regarded as the central location of that place so that Muslims from surrounding areas can assemble there for the observance of

Friday prayers. If there exists a big city that civilization has itself granted the status of a central location, well and good. If there is no such city, then the concerned Imam can declare any suitable place as '*misr jamae*' and instruct the Muslims living in the vicinity to assemble there for Friday prayers.

Imam Ibn Hummam writes in Fath alQadeer, If the Imam designates a particular place as a city and commands the people to observe their Friday prayers there, then it is permissible to offer the Friday prayers there. If he forbids the residents of a particular place from observing the Friday prayers, then they should not observe it." [Vol 1, page 409]

However, if there is no Imam, then just as Friday prayers can be established by the mutual agreement of the Muslims, and just as a qazi can be nominated on the basis of their mutual consent, then so also their mutual consent and agreement can take the place of an Imam and designate a town as '*misr jamae*'. I have no idea which clause of the Qur'an or the Sunnah is violated by this, or which principle does it go against.

The motive of Islam behind making 'city' a precondition was simply that people should assemble at a central spot to observe their Friday prayers instead of offering these prayers dispersed in their respective villages. But God alone knows why the import of this condition was totally reversed and instead of instructing the villagers to assemble at a central spot, they were summarily absolved of offering the prayers itself! It is quite probable that this happened because the jurists took the word '*misr*' to mean 'city' in its literal sense and interpreted the Hadith to mean that Friday prayers can only be offered in a city. Now since the cities are usually far apart, and traveling to a city from a considerable distance would make a person a 'traveler', on whom the Friday prayers are anyway not obligatory, it so came to be ruled that the Friday prayers are obligatory upon only those villagers who stay in the vicinity of cities and the ones staying far off stand absolved of this obligation.

To exempt millions of people staying in villages from performing an act that the Qur'an and the authentic aHadith and the Sunnah and the consensus of the Muslim community have declared obligatory upon every person at the individual level (*farz ain*) on the basis of a Hadith that is weak in its chain, disputed in its authenticity and interpretation is nowhere close to being cautious. In any case, the concerned Hadith has only listed '*misr jamae*' as a condition. It does not have any mention of a specific population of residents or a specific number of shops or any such detail. Thereby, these factors are not the conditions for establishing Friday prayers derived from the Hadith per se; rather, it is the interpretation of '*misr jamae*' understood by jurists that has made them preconditions thereof. In other words, the argument that has been presented to absolve the Muslims residing in villages from an act that has been obligated by the Qur'an and the Hadith/Sunnah has not been derived from the Qur'an and the Hadith/Sunnah. Rather, it has been derived from an interpretation of a Hadith. The exemption from the obligation would still have been valid if this Hadith had no other interpretation than this one or if the Hadith would have been unambiguous. However, in this case, there can be multiple interpretations of this Hadith. Hence, in my humble opinion, it is the requirement of piety and cautiousness that we should prefer that interpretation which opens up ways towards the establishment of an obligation instead of adopting that interpretation which opens up ways to absolve people of this obligation.

The definition of 'city' that I have presented makes it possible for the majority of rural Muslims and even nomadic Muslims to offer the Friday prayers in accordance with Islamic law. This would require rural areas to be clubbed in small circles extending from 4-5 miles to a maximum of 8-9 miles depending upon the demands of the location concerned. From each of these circles, the local Muslim population should declare a central location as

'*misr jamae*' on the basis of mutual agreement and consent. The other villages in that circle should then be declared as subordinate villages that come under this city and it should be proclaimed that Muslims from these villages should assemble in that circle's central location to offer their Friday prayers. This system would not only confirm with the authentic aHadith but would also not clash with the principles and conditions of the Hanafi jurists. The jurists have provided various definitions for those villages that come 'under' a city. Some have set the limit at 9 miles, others at 6 miles and some others at 2 miles. Certain other jurists aver that if a person can come to the city and offer his Friday prayers and then return home by sundown, his hometown would be regarded as being under that city. The author of Badaye has preferred this opinion and it finds support in the Hadith as well.

It has been narrated by Abu Hurairah (God be pleased with him) that the Prophet said,

"The Friday prayers are obligatory upon such a person who returns home before night sets in."[1]

[Tirmizi]

Lady Aishah (God be pleased with her) narrates that:

"People used to arrive for the Friday prayers from their residential quarters and havaali." *[Bukhari]*

In yet another Hadith, it has been narrated from Abu Hurairah (God be pleased with him) that:

"The Prophet ﷺ said, Listen! How is it that some of you take their flock of goats and wander for miles in search of fodder but do not come here to attend the Friday prayers! (After repeating this statement thrice,

[1] Although this Hadith has a weak chain, but the same content has been narrated on the authority of Abu Hurairah, Anas bin Malik, Ibn Umar and Ma'awiyah (God be pleased with them all). Moreover, it has been accepted by Nafae, Hasan, Ikramah, Ibraheem Nakhai, Ata', Awza and Abu Thaur.

he continued...) The heart of such a person would be sealed."

From the aforementioned aHadith and from the derivations the jurists have made in this regard, we come to know that the villages that can be counted under a city cover an area of around 6-7 miles, whose residents can come to the city to offer their Friday prayers and return home by sundown. It is obligatory upon all Muslims staying in this circle to come to the city and offer their Friday prayers, regardless of whether they are permanent rural residents or nomads.

Ibn Hummam has written in Fath alQadeer:

"The Friday prayers are obligatory upon anyone who resides in any part of the area that comes 'under' the city just as they are obligatory upon the residents of the city. He should come to the city to offer his prayers." *[Vol 1, page 411]*

Concluding summary

I shall now present a summary of whatever has been discussed above to make my stand as clear as possible. By this, you would get an idea of the extent to which my views about offering Friday prayers in villages are in accordance or deviance with the Hanafi jurisprudence.

1. According to the Hanafi jurists, it is impermissible to establish the Friday prayers separately in small villages... I absolutely agree with this.
2. According to the Hanafi jurist, the Friday prayers should be established only in '*misr jamae*'... I concur with them in this clause as well.
3. The Hanafi jurists consider only two kinds of places as '*misr jamae*'- places like cities and towns that have been made '*misr jamae*' by civilization itself, and those places that the Imam of the day declares as 'city' for the sake of establishing the Friday prayers. Here, the only amendment I have sought is that in places where there

is no Imam present, the collective consensus of the Muslims should be accepted as 'Imam', and this authority of theirs- by which they can declare a particular location in a place as '*misr jamae*'- should also be accepted. Since the Hanafi jurists have already declared the consensus of the Muslims as Imam in the matter concerning the establishment of Friday prayers, there is no reason why doing so in the matter of declaring a place as '*misr jamae*' should be considered against their principles.

4. The Hanafi scholars had ruled that villagers have been exempted from offering the Friday prayers for the sole reason that the ruling authorities had been neglectful of establishing a system for the establishment of Friday prayers there. Because of this, the Friday prayers remained confined to the first kind of '*misr jamae*', i.e. cities and big towns. Now because the cities were far apart, the Hanafi jurists were compelled to issue an edict that the Friday prayers are not obligatory upon the villagers. It is but obvious that the villagers were not absolved from offering the Friday prayers simply because they happened to be villagers. Hence, the residents of those villages that come under a city, i.e. they are located at a distance of 7 or 8 or 9 miles from the principal city have been obligated by Hanafi jurists to offer the Friday prayers just as the residents of the city themselves are. I say that it is incumbent upon us to remove the difficulty that has led to this edict. Once the difficulty is solved, this expedient edict would also be rendered null and void. The Muslims would then be able to perform an act that has been made obligatory upon them by the Qur'an. However, there are some scholars who insist on keeping this difficulty intact so that the old edict that has come to be venerated because of its antiquity can remain in place, even if millions of Muslims were to remain devoid of the grace of the Qur'anic obligation.

The need to amend the edict

It can be easily understood from the above summary that there is ample scope in the Hanafi jurisprudence for the system of establishment of Friday prayers that I am proposing, and there is no concrete reason why it should be termed unlawful. Now allow me to relate to you in brief why there was a need to propose such a system and what value it holds from the Islamic legal perspective.

As long as Muslims ruled India- however impious the rulers may have been- the social and collective system of Islam remained established in this country to some extent or the other. In the very least, Islamic laws were executed by Muslim rulers and the people of our community- the classes and the masses, urban and the rural- all used to refer their matters to them. This was a strong means of keeping the Muslims connected and related to *deen*. However, when that namesake Islamic government was also abolished there was no system left to keep the community mutually connected. Now, our community- and its only lease of life- remains dependent upon the relations forged by the Islamic laws related to the articles of faith, the acts of worship, culture and civilization. Our strength lies in the strength of these relations; their weakness would render us weak, and the end of these relations would herald our end as well. As of now, these relations are quite strong in cities, despite all the factors that have gone in to weaken them. However, the links that could connect the rural Muslim population (spread over millions of miles in the form of small and disjoint villages) to forge religious relations have become so feeble that they would collapse at the slightest jerk. These Muslims have turned into sitting ducks, ready to be attacked by every preying hunter. In places where they are in scant numbers, even their lives, properties and honour are at stake. If this scenario is not rectified at the earliest, you would observe that the rural Muslim population would leave the Muslim community in hordes, signaling the demise of the Muslim community itself. I say this because

a good 65 million of our 80 million-strong community resides in villages.

Now if we want to walk in the footsteps of other communities, there can be, and there indeed are, a number of rural reformation programmes that can be implemented. But it is plain obvious that such programmes cannot lead to the formation of an Islamic community or any religious bonding. The Islamic community can only be strengthened by strengthening its religious bonds, and none of the methods that can be employed to do so can ever be successful until the system of Friday prayers is established in villages. The first step in the path of religious reform and organization of the community is to create religious relations and unity among scattered individuals and disjoint communities and the best way to do so is the one that has been prescribed by God Himself- instituting the Friday prayers.

Tarjumanul Qur'an
(Safar and Rabi ul Awwal 1357 AH/
April and May 1938 CE)